

Duquesne University:



THE HOHENZOLLERNS

THE HOHENZOLLERNS

HERBERT EULENBERG
,,

TRANSLATED BY
M. M. BOZMAN



WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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FOREWORD

It would be a shabby, not to say a dastardly, act to attempt to pour scorn and ridicule upon a once Regal House now fallen from power. The princely race of Hohenzollern has, like every other, produced men good and bad, strong and weak, men of noble character and men of coarser mould, rulers bellicose and—the fact needs especial emphasis—rulers peace-loving, mild, and conciliatory. Owing its sovereignty in the Mark of Brandenburg as it does to the diplomatic ability of one of the line, the dynasty can show a whole succession of compliant, unwarlike, and amenable persons among subsequent rulers of the race. "No peace with the Hohenzollerns, the everlasting fighting-cocks of Europe!": that cry for vengeance and extermination which went up during the World War—more particularly from our relations, the Anglo-Saxon races—cannot be justified on any historical basis; in every age the family can put up a good defence against such a defamation of their breed.

If any one particular family trait can be said with certainty to characterize the Hohenzollerns from generation to generation, it must be, at worst, the overweening sense of their own power, the tendency to despotism, which is to be found in most of them. And it is just this haughty absolutism, degenerating from time to time into pure tyranny, which has apparently drawn down on this Royal House in fullest measure the furious enmity of the freer peoples of Western Europe and of democratic America. Never before has any dynasty been the target of such loathing and scorn as fell to the lot of William II and all his House, and was reflected in English, French, and American journals during the four years of the War. Foreign nations regarded, and were determined to regard, him as the man chiefly responsible for the War, and he was attacked through his ancestors and his very grandchildren with an excess of malice, which, after the flight

of that last Emperor, may well appear exaggerated and ludicrous.

The present book invites its readers to a tour of the ancestral portrait gallery of the Hohenzollerns; it is an unprejudiced attempt to present them in all simplicity as they gaze down upon us from the paint and canvas of what they did and what they left undone. That the personality, the mind, and temperament of the self-constituted guide will, indeed must, find incidental expression is, of course, self-evident. We have long since realized the impossibility of writing history from a purely objective, an entirely impartial standpoint, unless a mere string of facts and documents are to be set down without comment; and even such a bald enumeration of historical facts can hardly be quite uncoloured and dispassionate. Since Napoleon's time we know that even Tacitus, who boasted that he would tell the story of the early days of Imperial Rome *sine ira et studio*—without passion or purpose—was not only entirely biased and one-sided, but did not even take the question of the truth of his facts very seriously. The history of the World War, to take as the clearest possible example this most recent and most terrible experience of the white races of the world, will read very differently according to whether a German, an Englishman, an American, a Frenchman, or a Russian is the historian, just as we get varying presentations of the age of the great upheavals in the Church according to the creed of each chronicler. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, the writer's personal attitude towards the men and questions of which he treats colours his account of them, let him take what pains he will to be wholly impartial. Each man reads and writes so-called world history as he chooses to see it or to tell it; whence it frequently comes about that the writing of history, the "making sense of the meaningless" as a witty sceptic has called it, like one of those distorting mirrors composed of convex and concave surfaces which one sees at village fairs,

may distort and minimize alleged heroes or magnify dwarfs. Still more often a whole history book is planned from the first to glorify or vilify those of whom it treats. But neither of these objects has been my concern here. I have traced the life and works of each individual Hohenzollern as impartially as I could, and have drawn them as true to life and to historical fact as my ability permitted. If here and there the effect is a little uncouth and ragged-edged, I would like to say in self-justification that in an age with no great taste for ancient history I had to do my best to portray these princes in the freshest colours on my palette, to give them the warmth and glow of life. It is of deliberate purpose, then, that in this book I have plied a more flamboyant and broader brush than is else my custom. The modern man, disinclined for the most part to occupy himself with the dead past, must have its story told with vigour, made intelligible and significant to *him*. Otherwise he will leave it unread and, easily sated and bored as he is, will study nothing but his own cherished time and age.

It seems, and has always seemed to me, well worth while if one can, as a biographer, arouse in the reader who gives one a portion of his time and attention a desire to pursue the subject farther—and that beyond the covers of one's own book. We should be ready to grasp at any means of rekindling the flagging interest felt to-day in history. It has been maintained, and not without justice, that we Germans have of late lacked great statesmen, and for this reason, among others, that we have ceased to cultivate a knowledge of history. The story of the Hohenzollerns coincides with a long stretch of the known history of our people, which indeed mirrors itself in them. The chief reproach we as Germans have to bring against them is that most of them took very little interest in their people, either in great matters or small. Few Hohenzollerns cared a straw for the intellectual and æsthetic history of the German race. Many were actually hostile to Teutonism, and professed a ludi-

crous Gallicism even at a time when our literature had reached its fullest bloom. They did not even make any great attempt to cultivate "society" in Germany. Frederick the Great was perhaps a solitary exception; he tried to bring on his aristocracy, but gave them up as intellectually incapable of development. The other Hohenzollerns as a rule gathered a Court about them—but it was a mere crowd of gossips, male and female, toadies and sycophants. This scorn for the German character and people, this deliberate cutting of themselves off from the heart and pulse of the nation, a fault of which few of them can be cleared, having been acted upon and observed for hundreds of years was the eventual cause of the fall of their dynasty. The majority of the Hohenzollerns cared far less for the love of the Fatherland, the love of a free people—upon which, as says the Imperial Anthem, the throne should rest firm as a rock in ocean—than for their own unlimited absolutism and their own sense of Divine right.

I will say no more of the end of that proud dynasty or of the beginning of this book! If my work has a moral purpose it is this: to strengthen something which, despite a brave show of patriotism, despite sabre-rattling and hurrahs, we Germans have too often lacked, both at home and abroad—Nationalism, or, in good German, "*Volksstolz*" (pride of race).

HERBERT EULENBERG

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THE HOHENZOLLERNS

FREDERICK I, ELECTOR AND MARGRAVE OF BRANDENBURG

(1372-1440)

THE love of the first Elector for the Mark of Brandenburg, with which he was solemnly invested at the Council of Constance on April 18, 1417, was probably not great and was certainly not so warm as his far-off descendant, the last reigning Hohenzollern, would have had us think at the unveiling of sundry memorials and other festivities in honour of the first ruler of his House; nor even as the Hohenzollern Wildenbruch portrays it in his play *The Quitzows*, more "*Dichtung*" than "*Wahrheit*" (more imaginative than truthful), when, in fervent blank verse and in a scene conceived after the most approved models, he makes his Electoral ancestors fall on their knees at the sight of the tower of Brandenburg and embrace the soil of the Mark.

The Burgrave of Nuremberg, Frederick VI of that name and title, got more worry than satisfaction out of the little territory awarded him in return for his advances of money and valuable diplomatic services to the Emperor Sigismund—that Emperor who was the murderer of Huss, and altogether one of the falsest and most treacherous rulers who ever sat on the Imperial Throne of Germany. It is not surprising that Frederick should have shown little affection for his fief, for to one born on the beautiful Pegnitz it must have seemed a dark and dreary waste. The haunt of none but Margraves, Wends, and bears, that trackless land used in those days to be called "the pounce-box of the Holy Roman Empire." These Brandenburgish Margraves, whom William II has immortalized in the Siegesallee as his ancestors,

despite the fact that portraits of these "antediluvian princes," as Frederick the Great called them, hardly exist, these dead and forgotten potentates sprang for the most part from the princely House of Ascania in Anhalt, probably so called from a castle of Ascania, near Aschersleben. The chief occupations of the Ascanian Margraves were "*Raufen, Saufen, und Taufen*" (fighting, drinking, and baptizing); according to temperament and taste they devoted themselves now to one, now to another of these activities. The Mark was nominally converted to Christianity at a comparatively early date. Albrecht of Ballenstadt, surnamed "the Bear," the first of the Ascanians, who was enfeoffed of the North Mark by the Emperor Lothair in 1134, found the country Christianized almost as far as Berlin, where at that time the virgin forest began. Afterwards the work of evangelization was for the most part carried on from the Monastery of Chorin, in whose abbey many of the Ascanians lie buried to this day.

Frederick, the first Hohenzollern Elector, did not, as Margrave, identify himself with his wild fief so lovingly as the Ascanians—North Germans who put their whole hearts into the struggles and troubles of the Mark—and he was not buried there. He remained a South German, and his heart was much more in his happy Frankish lands than in the waste, still half-savage tract, which his skill in negotiation and conciliation had won him. He sprang from an old line of Swabian nobility, the von Zollerns, or "von Zolre," as it was written in the Middle Ages, authentically tracing their descent from a certain Count Burchardus von Zolorin, or de Zolre, who is said to have fallen in battle in 1061—an end in which, by the way, no very great number of his Hohenzollern descendants have emulated him. The son of this Burchard was one Frederick I, surnamed "*Maute*" (Tax-gatherer). In Berlin Castle there still hang a few extremely doubtful portraits of these first Hohenzollerns, showing them bristling with weapons and loaded

with accoutrements of war or the chase. Frederick the Great and his sister of Bayreuth were terrified of them as children, and used to call them "the Elk-heads."

About the year 1190, under Frederick II, son of the above-mentioned Frederick, who became first Burgrave of Nuremberg, the Swabian dynasty was transplanted to Frankish territory, probably at the instigation of the Hohenstaufen Emperor, with whom the House of Zolre established friendly and neighbourly relations from his accession. It was probably under Frederick Barbarossa that the family was raised to the Burgravate, at first retaining its Swabian possessions, particularly its ancestral castle of Hohenzollern near Reutlingen, perched in the Swabian Alps at an altitude of some nine-hundred metres on the summit of a little limestone crag. By a fortunate chance the old Castle of Zollern was renovated and restored as a "Royal Castle" between 1850 and 1856, under Frederick William IV; for its resuscitation under William II and his "*Ruinenrenovierungsrat*"—his "Councillor for the Renovation of Ruins"—the architect Bodo von Ebbard, would certainly have been a horrible business. In course of time the Hohenzollerns split into two lines—the Swabian and the Frankish. The elder line, the Swabian, played their part through a collateral branch as petty rulers, the Counts, later Princes, of Hohenzollern-Hechingen and Sigmaringen, down to the nineteenth century, when in 1850 Charles Anthony, the last reigning Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, together with his cousin of Hechingen, made over his little dominions to the King of Prussia in the beautiful conviction that he was thereby making a sacrifice for the future unity of Germany. A grandson of this good man, however, has outlasted his Imperial cousin William II, and retained the throne of Rumania, to which he acceded as nephew of the excellent first King Charles of Rumania, Charles Anthony's son.

From the first the position of the Burgraves of Nurem-

berg was rendered difficult by the tooth-and-nail opposition of that free Imperial city on the Pegnitz to the lordlings who were attempting to force it under their yoke. Nuremberg justly ranked with Augsburg at the time as the staple headquarters of the trade between Northern Europe and the East by way of Venice. The wealthy merchants of the town, the nobility and superior artificers, were completely united on the one point of resistance to these noble lords of Zolre, whose sole idea was to wrest as much money from them as possible, whether in the form of court fees, building levies, or ground rent. With fair expedition—that is to say by about 1270—the Nurembergers succeeded in driving their lords of Zollern out of the Imperial fortress, enlarged by Barbarossa, which towered over and dominated their town, and in confining them to a smaller castle within the city. Somewhat later the burghers separated this castle from the rest of the town by a high wall, thus avoiding even the sight of the foreign Counts, and the Burgraves accepted the situation on condition of being allowed to bleed the city of the sum of five thousand gulden.

For the most part these early Burgraves of Nuremberg showed themselves good men of business and built up the family fortunes. Bit by bit, in the form of fiefs, prefectures, and freeholds, by loans, pledges, inheritance, or purchase, they amassed great territories, so that at the time of the fall of the Hohenstaufens they were regarded as the most powerful House in Franconia. Frederick III, grandson of the first Burgrave, acquired by marriage and inheritance the rich region about Bayreuth, in addition to the lands near Ansbach which had already fallen to the Hohenzollerns, and was regarded throughout the Empire as a “king-maker.” It was he, and not, as Schiller tells us in *Der Graf von Habsburg*, his weakest ballad, some obscure chaplain to the Archbishop of Mainz, who caused the choice of the Electors to fall on Rudolph of Habsburg and brought him the first news of his election. Thus the Houses



ELECTOR FREDERICK I

of Habsburg and Hohenzollern, were linked by Fate from the first (a fact which William II was never tired of emphasizing, and would have liked to see immortalized in drama by all the poets), even as they have now fallen together.

Frederick III's son, Frederick IV, was also a good Emperor's man, and was held in high favour by Louis of Bavaria, Rudolph of Habsburg's grandson, whose Privy Councillor and Secretary he became, more especially as he had borne a bold part in Louis's victory over Frederick of Austria, his rival for the Imperial Throne, and had subsequently been honoured as *Salvator Imperii*, Saviour of the Empire.

Among this Count's successors one John II may be mentioned, whom Louis of Bavaria actually appointed Warden and Captain of the Mark of Brandenburg, and who even entered Berlin. History has surnamed him "*Conquaestor*" ("Acquirer"), a title of honour equally deserved by every Burgrave of the House of Hohenzollern before him. He accepted a bribe of fourteen thousand silver marks from Charles IV of Luxemburg, Louis's rival, abandoned his Imperial benefactor's cause, and entered into a perpetual pact with the wily Luxemburger. This Hohenzollern fox also succeeded in rounding off his House's earlier acquisitions of Ansbach and Bayreuth by taking possession of Orlamünde. It is said that the last Countess of Orlamünde appears to this day as a "White Lady" in the castles of the Hohenzollerns, particularly in the damp, musty-smelling later ancestral home of the line at Kölln on the Spree, whenever the death of one of the family or some other great disaster to the House is imminent.

Frederick V, father of the first Elector of Brandenburg, proved a no less circumspect and able Burgrave of Nuremberg than his forbears. He used the favour of the Bohemian Emperor, Charles IV, to whom his father had sold and pledged himself, to obtain a *Privilegium* in which he him-

self was most solemnly proclaimed Burgrave, and his House a noble member of the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire. This *Privilegium* was promulgated by the instrument of a "Golden Bull," similar to that famous one enshrining the basic statute of the Imperial constitution regulating the election of the Emperor—that is to say, it was attested with golden seal-cases, stamped on both sides. Frederick V thus attained the rank of a Prince of the Empire, and henceforth bore, in addition to the black-and-white chequered shield of the Zollerns whose colours later passed to Prussia, the ancient lion escutcheon of his House. He abdicated, leaving his lands to be divided between his two sons; the younger, Frederick VI, the Brandenburger to be, receiving Ansbach as the less profitable portion. The future founder of the line of Prussian Hohenzollerns, in common with all his House, ceased about this time to enjoy great pecuniary prosperity. Nothing more was to be squeezed out of the free city of Nuremberg, with which the foreign Swabian Counts had never established a good understanding. Frederick attempted to milk the town of Rothenburg, but it manfully withstood his siege for many weeks, while his own lands, whose management he had neglected for this and similar fruitless campaigns, no longer brought much to the exchequer. The King of Prussia's ancestor was within an ace of becoming a ruined outcast, a "*Hasenjager*" (hare-catcher), as the expression then was, when the new pretender and candidate to the Imperial crown, Sigismund, took him into his service with an annual salary of about four thousand gulden. Frederick and his brother had just been obliged to pawn the family insignia to the Jews, and consequently jumped at the offer made by Sigismund's emissary.

Sigismund was a younger son of the Emperor Charles IV, that wily and extravagant Luxemburger who, in addition to all the lands which he had inherited from his father, the Bohemian King John, or had acquired by marriage, con-

quest, or guile, had entered into possession of Brandenburg. At that time the Mark was under the suzerainty of the Wittelsbachs. The Ascanian House having died out with the last Waldemar, Louis the Bavarian, in his capacity as Emperor, had simply impounded the country as an Imperial fief, and had divided it amongst his sons. There had been a short but thrilling episode of a false Waldemar, which Willibald Alexis, the Walter Scott of the Mark, describes for us at length in one of his romances, when a miller's lad of Hundeluft in Anhalt, trading on his likeness to the late Margrave, gave himself out as a resurrected Waldemar, reigned for a short time, declared it to be the easiest of professions, abdicated, and was buried on his death in Dessau with royal honours. The Wittelsbach triumph in the Mark was also a short-lived one. In the Treaty of Fürstenwalde the Luxemburger recovered the fief by a trick from Louis's younger son, Otto, whom history, no doubt very justly, has surnamed "the Lazy," whereupon "the Lazy" retired with an ample income to Bavaria, and settled down to permanent repose at the early age of thirty-four. Charles IV ruled the Mark in the name of his two sons, Wenceslas and Sigismund; ruled it by no means badly as a dependency of his beloved native land Bohemia, and brought order and peace into the country. A part of the castle he built at Tangermünde on the Elbe still stands to-day; it was there he liked best to be, and there that he concluded an alliance with the Hansa, the great league of cities in North Germany. At his death the greater part of the Mark fell to Sigismund, the more ambitious of his sons, who coveted the Imperial crown of Wenceslas, his idle and drunken Bohemian brother, even during the latter's lifetime.

That he got what he coveted as early as 1410, nine years before the death of Wenceslas, who was deposed by the Rhenish Electors, he owed first and foremost to his new man of affairs, the Burgrave of Nuremberg. The Burgrave

Frederick must have been a man of very good appearance, short in figure, his full round face surrounded by long flowing dark locks, according to the fashion of the age as portrayed for us in some of the self-portraits of the Nuremberg master, Dürer. Probably he had his pleasing exterior to thank for the rich bride he won later, the wealthy Duke of Bavaria-Landshut's daughter, called "Elsa the Beautiful," who was related on the maternal side to the Visconti of Lombardy. Frederick's good looks were not belied by an exceedingly able and eloquent address, which came strongly into play in his dealings with rulers and princes. In the contest for the Imperial crown he first sided with Ruprecht of the Palatinate, the husband of his sister Elizabeth; but after the death of this Emperor, whose reign was one perpetual conflict, he allowed himself to be won over to Sigismund's cause, and "worked" the Rhenish Electors as his agent. He succeeded in gaining for Sigismund the adherence of the aged Archbishop of Treves and that of the Count Palatine. With the assistance of these two he then elected his employer "Roman King" at the electoral city of Frankfort-on-Main. By this act Frederick used the Brandenburg vote for Sigismund, despite the fact that the latter, who was perpetually in money difficulties, had in the meantime mortgaged the Mark to his cousin Jocelyn of Moravia. And, as if the confusion in Germany were not great enough already, scarcely a week later the Archbishops of Mainz and Cologne elected Jocelyn "Roman King"! There were thus for a time three "Roman Kings" of Germany—Wenceslas, who still nominally bore the title, his brother Sigismund, and their cousin Jocelyn. Fortunately for Sigismund, Jocelyn died a few months later very suddenly; though, indeed, Sigismund, who was destitute of conscience, is said to have been not unconnected with the tragedy. He had so broken his own brother Wenceslas by repeated arrests and confinements that the latter was content to restrict himself to Bohemia and to his title as

"Roman King," and eventually resigned his rights to the Imperial dignity in favour of his stronger brother. Thereupon Sigismund had himself solemnly crowned Emperor at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1414, having in the meantime won over the hitherto hostile spiritual lords of Cologne and Mainz. To his able and statesman-like agent his "dearly-beloved Uncle and Prince," Frederick of Hohenzollern, the new Emperor presented as reward for his services the Captaincy and Vicegerency of the Mark of Brandenburg, masterless since the death of Jocelyn. Actually it was an appointment similar to that which Frederick's grandfather, John, had held as Warden and Captain of Brandenburg under Louis of Bavaria; and some historians even maintain that the enfeoffment was no more than a business arrangement in which Sigismund, extravagant but impecunious, mortgaged the Mark of Brandenburg to his agent Frederick in lieu of the hundred thousand gold Hungarian gulden he owed him for his expenses and his services.

The deputies from the cities, coming with the chivalry of Brandenburg to pay homage to Sigismund after the unexpected decease of Jocelyn of Moravia, did, indeed, declare that they would also do homage to "*his money*," to the Burgrave of Nuremberg whom he was sending into the Mark as his representative; so their opinion evidently was—and no one contradicted it—that Sigismund, chronically impecunious, had pledged their country to his creditor, the Burgrave, just as he had formerly done to his cousin Jocelyn.

It is very doubtful if the Mark of those days was as clamorous and urgent in its demands for orderly government and a strong hand as Court historians and bards of the House of Hohenzollern have subsequently said and sung. Frederick's first ambassador to the Mark, Wend von Uleburg (or Eulenburg), a knight whom he sent on before him as a feeler, was straightway hounded from the country; at least one party in the land, and that the strongest, the

mentally and economically independent Brandenburgish nobility, received the new ruler ungraciously, indeed with open hostility. The Junkers and all their kind had been exceedingly well content under the rough but easy-going Jocelyn of Moravia, their late lord of blessed memory, who, like the aristocratic Russian landlords of the past century, merely returned at intervals from foreign parts to collect ready money in Brandenburg, and then, without troubling himself further about the welfare of the Mark which to him was simply a mortgaged security, departed to make ducks and drakes of the sums thus raised in Moravia.

Now, however, the Junkers suddenly found themselves provided with a new lord from the Frankish lands—"the Nuremberg toy," as they mockingly called him—who was coming to receive their homage, and to redeem the castles which Jocelyn had mortgaged to them; and men whose descendants were later to be loyal servants of the Hohenzollerns declared that, "if it rained Nurembergers for a year, they would keep their castles nevertheless!" The caitiff townsmen and the servile classes might do the new man homage if they liked, but they, whose blood was every whit as good as that of this new-comer from Nuremberg, would never bow their proud necks before the upstart who had won his position by low cunning.

The family of Bredow, however, and, remarkably and significantly enough, that of Bismarck, which was settled at Stendal in the Mark at least as early as 1270, were from the first fairly well disposed to the Hohenzollerns, declared themselves for Frederick, and were called by him his "two beloved B's." The fact that in later times an occasional Bismarck proved treasonable or rebellious when things went ill with him does not alter the family's essential submissiveness to the Hohenzollerns. For the rest, a certain number of towns also proved hostile to the intruder, principally the villages of Berlin and Kölln, which even in Frederick's days united to form a single borough. As

at Nuremberg, the citizens were most unwilling to have the new lord within their walls, accorded him bare lodging in the tall house in the Klosterstrasse (since rebuilt and known to-day as the *Lagerhaus*), and even that for short periods only and for a strictly limited number of followers. Close beside that house stands the *Gymnasium*, or Grammar School, of the *Grauen Kloster*, where Bismarck, as he says of himself at the opening of his *Reflections and Reminiscences*, was made a "normal product of our State education."

It took the conflicts of years—conflicts which, like the battles of the *Iliad*, have been described in detail by the bards and historians of Brandenburg—before Frederick, at the head of a following of Frankish knights and men-at-arms, succeeded in breaking down the resistance of the noble families of the Mark, the Quitzows, the Putlitzes, the Rochows, the Alvenslebens, and the Holzendorfs. Throughout this struggle Frederick again showed himself a most live and able diplomatist, skilled in ensnaring the feet of his neighbours and of his opponents. His cunning did him almost as much service as his "*Donnerbüchsen*," the new Frankish fire-arms, by aid of which he successfully captured the castles and strongholds of the refractory nobility. "Lazy Greta," a counterpart of the terrible "fat Bertha" of the World War, one of his most powerful pieces of ordnance, and thus named because of the difficulty of transporting it, spread panic and destruction at Friesach, Plaue, and other fortresses of the Mark.

It was thus by bloodshed and the strong arm that the first Hohenzollern forced an entrance into the Mark, and it was by the sword, the wheel, and other more disgraceful penalties, such as the hempen halter, that he slowly made himself master of its hostile and rebellious nobility. He had learned the art of racking and torturing in Nuremberg, whose torture-chamber we look upon with horror to-day. Whatever his methods, Frederick, who designated himself

"God's steward in the Principality for the strengthening of justice and the defeat of injustice," proceeded with such severity and ruthlessness in his merely temporary dominions that at the end of two years he was able to leave the Mark with a quiet mind in charge of his energetic wife, "Elsa the Beautiful," and engage again in diplomatic journeys as Sigismund's agent. "God's steward!" The phrase shows that even the earliest of the Hohenzollern, while serving merely his own princely interest, liked to invest his historical calling with the halo of Divine authority, just as so many of his successors, "by the Grace of God," have done since. Frederick, having rejoined Sigismund, his liege lord, in Nuremberg, accompanied him to his coronation at Aix-la-Chapelle, and afterwards proceeded with him to the Council of Constance. Being well practised in restoring order in the Mark, he found little difficulty, while in South Germany, in rapidly crushing a refractory Tyrolean duke, who supported and harboured the Emperor's enemy, the Pope, though the Emperor put very few troops at his disposal for the purpose. He was now to receive his well-earned reward. Sigismund could not do otherwise than formally invest his "dearly beloved Uncle" with the Margravate and the Electoral dignity. It is true that the legal instrument by which this was effected provided for the possibility of this grant being rescinded upon condition of the antecedent payment of the sum of four hundred thousand gulden; but for the moment there was no practical possibility of this, as the Emperor lived perpetually beyond his means, and would never be able to get such a sum together. A few years later the Margraves of Meissen, the Wettins, were invested by Sigismund with the Electorate of Saxony, so that the House of Wettin and the House of Hohenzollern can date the beginning of their electoral dignity from the same epoch.

The incident of the burning of the Bohemian heretic Huss, which took place during the Council of Constance

despite the Emperor's safe conduct, probably troubled the great men there assembled very little, until a few years later the outbreak of the Hussite Wars showed them that the flames that consumed the body of the pious and heroic scholar of Prague had set all Europe in a blaze. His investiture complete, Frederick slowly made his way back to the Mark, where he now for the first time exacted real homage as an hereditary prince, and also caused a first extraordinary "*Landbede*" to be raised. The "*Bede*" (bidding), as its name implies, was a free contribution made to the lord of the land in answer to an appeal for the maintenance of justice and the government of the country. The new first Elector of Brandenburg held his own by a wearisome series of conflicts and covenants. The nobility of the Mark long remained stubborn and intractable, and rejoiced, openly or covertly, when the Nuremberg intruder had to defend himself against the attacks of his eastern enemies, the Pomeranians or Mecklenburgians. By slow degrees, however, certain Junkers of the Mark began to take an interest in the brawls of their Nuremberg lord, fought in his battles, and were dubbed knights on the field with the usual compliments and ceremonies.

Frederick's removal to the North did not alter his bent for business and diplomacy. After numerous battles he negotiated an armistice with his enemies, and entered into a treaty with the King of Poland, whose little daughter was thereupon betrothed to the Elector's seven-year-old son, later Frederick II. The fact that this pact was secretly directed against the Teutonic Order which stood for the propagation of the German spirit and culture beyond the Oder and the Weichsel, mattered little or nothing to the new Elector, who for the moment was solely concerned with consolidating his own power. He was even bold enough by this treaty with the Poles to play fast and loose with the favour of his friend and Emperor, Sigismund, acting as coolly in the matter as his grandfather John had

done in breaking with Louis of Bavaria as soon as he saw his own advantage elsewhere. Sigismund had some right to complain of this step on the part of his former favourite, to whom he wrote a long letter enumerating all the favours conferred upon him. He revenged himself, however, in his own way for Frederick's perfidy by making the Wettins electors, and thereby implanted in the very heart of Germany the seeds of that bloody and senseless rivalry between Brandenburg-Prussia and Saxony which raged for so many centuries.

An open animosity between the Imperial nephew and his "dearly-beloved Uncle," his former employee and agent, lasted for several years from this time. In the first place Frederick, to Sigismund's disgust, was appointed by the Reichstag Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Army in the wars against the Hussites, and that, too, by those very Estates of the Empire who had to supply the Emperor with money to carry on these most costly campaigns. The Elector did not distinguish himself very greatly in his rôle of generalissimo against the democratic armies of the Hussites under their two great leaders Ziska and Prokop; the best that can be said for him is that he counselled speedy negotiations with the Bohemians when the new type of warfare evolved by the Hussites, who were strong in infantry and used their baggage wagons in a manner as "tanks," won them numerous victories; counselled negotiations, because he was cunning enough to foresee that they would lead to a schism in the ranks of his powerful opponents.

Frederick himself, it appears, after a lifetime of costly brawls and battles, grew weary of war. A new invasion by the Pomeranians and Mecklenburgians found him weakly garrisoned, and ended with his precipitate retreat before the superior might of the enemy, leaving them in possession of all his weapons of assault, including the much-admired fire-arms, which were clearly beginning to get out

of date. The Elector had now had enough of the Mark of Brandenburg. He placed the Regency in the hands of his eldest son, John, at a *Landtag* held at Rathenow, and did the best that remained for him to do under the circumstances—that is, he set out for Vienna to throw himself on the mercy of his former patron, the Emperor Sigismund. In this matter, too, he was but the first of a series of Hohenzollerns who were compelled eventually to secure their own safety by doing homage to Vienna and the Habsburgs. Having submitted on all points to his Imperial lord, he succeeded by the latter's mediation in patching up a peace with Pomerania and Mecklenburg, and so preserving some remnants of the Mark in the form of Priegnitz and Uckermark for his son and heir. Thereupon he washed his hands of further trouble about the Mark and retired to his Frankish lands, which had all reverted to him upon the death of his childless brother. The original Hohenzollern castle in Nuremberg having been burned to the ground by a hostile Bavarian cousin in some family quarrel, he set up his Court in the little stronghold of Cadolzburg, near Fürth, an ancient ancestral castle of his line.

When Sigismund died after a new period of amity with Frederick, the latter for a time indulged the hope that, as he had been elected Commander-in-Chief against the Hussites, he might now be elected to the Imperial Crown. Indeed, it is a pity that this did not occur, for the "Imperial question" would thus have been settled for the Hohenzollerns at the right time, and not, as it was, too late. The Electors, however, choose Sigismund's son-in-law, Albrecht II of the House of Habsburg, who, after a reign of one year, was succeeded by his utterly incapable cousin, Frederick IV. To Frederick, one-time Elector of Brandenburg, who came to the Imperial election from Nuremberg to cast his vote for the doughty landgrave Louis of Hesse, this was the last political disillusionment. But Habsburgs

were now trumps at the elections, and were to remain so to the last, when Charles V was elected Emperor.

Six months after the election of Frederick IV, who, unhappily for Germany, was to sit for more than fifty years upon the Imperial throne, Elector Frederick died at his castle in Franconia, far from the Mark with which he had been saddled as a disastrous pledge for debts unpaid. Nearly seventy years had chilled his blood a little, and he had ordered a fire to be lit; it warmed him but for his hands, into which his failing heart could no longer drive the blood—those cold fingers which, as a pious Catholic and heretic-hunter, the dying man often folded in prayer just as we see him do in the altar-piece which once adorned his castle chapel and was later carried to Berlin. A few hours before his death Frederick watched a belated flight of storks pass by his window on their southward journey. “You come from Brandenburg,” he said with a weak motion of his hand towards the birds, “and you do well to leave it and fly away. Who would care to stay in such a land, above all in winter!”

FREDERICK II, "THE IRON-TOOTH"

(1413-1471)

THERE is a savour of romance in the childhood of the second Hohenzollern ruler of Brandenburg, the second son of four whom "Elsa the Beautiful" bore to her husband. At eight years of age the boy was sent to the Polish Court, there to be brought up as the betrothed of the little Princess Jadwiga and as heir-apparent to the Polish throne. But cleverly as his father had contrived the policy which had brought these things to pass, he had not reckoned with the almost miraculous fact that a youthful fourth wife of the aged Polish King would present her husband with three sons. It requires small penetration to see that this startling threefold event must have considerably damped the delights of the young Hohenzollern Prince's stay in Warsaw. His future wife's stepmother, in particular, felt that the foreign lad was very much in the way, and did all she could to speed him on his homeward journey to Brandenburg. The young Prince, however, despite slights and humiliations, clung to his gentle, snow-white Jadwiga, and, indeed, could not be torn from her till his poor little bride died—who knows how!—at the early age of eighteen. Not till then, when he had no longer any place at all in Warsaw, did Frederick return to his German home. It is said that he subsequently showed signs of melancholia, and feared for the loss of his own reason. We are told, too, that he preserved a romantic adoration for his dead bride beyond the grave. Whether or not he composed verses to his lost little Polish Princess is unknown, but most of the Hohenzollerns have been without a feeling for poetry. There are a few exceptions to this rule: Frederick the Great was one; a certain sentimental Prince George of

Prussia, son of the laconic Frederick William III's eloquent brother, who wrote a dozen or so worthless dramas under the name of "G. Conrad," and, in our own days, Ernst von Wildenbruch, were others.

A few years after his return to his father, who at that time was governing his happily reunited Frankish lands from his stronghold at Cadolzburg, Frederick, still pining at times for Poland and Jadwiga, was faced with a task which gradually drove his love sorrows from his mind. He was entrusted by his father with the government of the Mark of Brandenburg, hitherto in the hands of his elder brother, John. John, dubbed by history "the Alchemist," like the more famous Emperor Rudolph II of a later day, was far more interested in the artificial manufacture of gold and in magic of all sorts than in ruling the Mark which had been placed under his care. The country was once more seething with insurrection and lawlessness; Berlin, for instance, would not allow John to set foot within it at all, though it had admitted his father on certain occasions.

The one-time Burgrave Frederick saw that it was time some change was made. He recalled his eldest son from his difficult office, and gave him some of his Frankish lands, choosing those that were richest in mines so that "the Alchemist" might continue his search for the Philosopher's Stone. At first Frederick II did not rule the Mark alone. The careful father had also made provision therewith for his youngest son, also called Frederick and surnamed "Frederick the Fat." Fat, indeed, he was, and lazy, and he justified his nickname by increasing apathy, till eventually he allowed the Government to pass wholly into the hands of his more energetic brother.

The Elector Frederick, who had been born at the castle of Tangermünde, at once made the insolent and turbulent aristocracy of the Mark feel a master's hand, and went to work so roundly, with the robber barons in particular, that within a very few years he was able to tell his neighbour,

the Duke of Mecklenburg, that a man might travel the roads between Schwerin and Berlin without fear of violence. With the idea of civilizing and refining his gentlemen of the Mark he next founded the Order of the Swan, the oldest order of his House. The Order admitted women as associates, was directed to the worship of Our Lady, and was intended to cultivate the fear of God and the love of honour in its knights; the Swan, which its members wore pendant on a necklace beneath the picture of the Mother of God, was to be a symbol of purity of heart to the knights and ladies of the Order. Long after, that Royal romantic Frederick William IV of Prussia desired very characteristically to revive this Order, which had died out at the Reformation, but, as with most of his plans, he found no response.

The strength of the baronage was, however, on the wane, and the Elector Frederick was still more on his guard against the towns, particularly the new twin municipality of Berlin-Köln, then beginning to expand and to take its place as the capital city of his Brandenburgish province. He appeared one day at the Spandau Gate of Berlin, with six hundred knights at his back, and the doors were readily thrown open to him—a notable example of submissiveness for those days, and probably to be explained by expectations of commercial advantage from the new lord on the part of this “colony of Obotrites,” as Berlin was considered in South Germany in those days. It cannot, indeed, be claimed that the conquest of Berlin by the Hohenzollerns proceeded thenceforward without friction. The new castle which Frederick began to build in the Köln quarter on the banks of the Spree so greatly exasperated the hitherto free burghers that they rose under the leadership of their Burgomaster, Bernd Ryke—the name deserves to be remembered in a prouder age—and fought with all their might against this threat to their corporate existence. This rising occurred in January 1448, and was known as

the "*Berliner Unwillen*" ("Berlin Discontents"), and it was destined to be repeated, almost exactly four hundred years later, under Frederick William IV.

It was here that Frederick showed himself in actual fact an "Iron Man" or "Iron-Tooth," as history was to name him later, by the remarkable tenacity, not to say cruelty, with which he withstood the desire of the towns, particularly of Berlin, for independence. By force of arms and by negotiations, in which he proved himself a true son of his diplomatic father, he put a stop to inter-city alliances in the Mark, and more particularly prevented Berlin from joining the Hanseatic League, a connection which Brandenburg's Luxemburg rulers had endeavoured to promote. Consequently he enjoys the doubtful fame of having broken the aspiration towards self-government and independence in his cities, and of having substituted electoral despotism; thus the principle of freedom on which the German Imperial cities took their stand during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance received its first blow in the Slavonicized and enslaved North, and it was not till the days of the great reforms of Baron von Stein of Nassau that the autonomy of the towns of Prussia was so much as thought of again.

"The Iron-Tooth" accordingly succeeded by force in building just such a castle or stronghold in the very heart of the twin communities of Kölln and Berlin, close to the banks of the Spree, as the sturdy Nurembergers had refused to his Frankish forbears; and there, eight years later, stood the earliest wing of the gloomy pile, crowned with its copper-roofed round-tower. The two bronze horse-breakers which stand to-day at the entrance to that castle, now a museum, were presented by the Czar Nicholas to his brother-in-law, Frederick William IV, and the two groups of statuary were christened respectively "Advance Impeded" and "Retrogression Advanced" by the Berlin malcontents of the 'forty-eight.

Frederick II, with whom the Emperor William II always



ELECTOR FREDERICK II, "THE IRON TOOTH"

felt strong ties of kinship, proceeded against the clergy with as confident a despotism as against the nobility and the citizens of his dominions. He acquired from the then reigning Pope the right to nominate his bishops, and he did his best to limit the spiritual jurisdiction of the "insolent priests." He even created something like an early form of the later Supreme Court in a "High Court of Justice," which met under the presidency of a certain knight, Paul of Kunersdorf, probably in the newly built castle on the Spree.

This very able Elector proved that he knew how to combine piety and utility by inducing the Pope to declare his belief in the so-called "Miraculous Blood" of Wilsnack. In that little town in the Mark, it was said, the Mystery of the Bloody Sweat was revealed on three occasions in the Host, though at the time, it may be remembered, the same miracle was reported in other towns and villages of Europe. Huss himself had thundered from Prague against the abuse of pilgrimages to the "Miraculous Blood" in this very town of Wilsnack. Frederick, however, having obtained the Papal sanction, the profitable stream of pilgrims to this little country town in his dominions flowed fuller than ever, and so continued till, a hundred years later, the miraculous Hosts were solemnly burned by the first evangelical pastor of Wilsnack.

Whether "the Iron-Tooth" was possessed by the sentiment of German patriotism, as some good Royalist historians of Brandenburg have asserted rather than argued, must remain an open question. He clearly betrayed a certain personal animosity to Poland, owing, no doubt, in part to his sad experiences as a youth in Warsaw, and he had bluntly refused to wear its crown when it was offered him on the death of his former father-in-law. His reannexation of the New Mark, which the Emperor Sigismund had forced his father to restore to the Knights of the Teutonic Order in perpetuity, as a penalty for his breach of faith,

was also an act of hostility to the Poles, who would doubtless otherwise have wrenched the whole of that territory from the decadent Order. Frederick, however, stole a march on the Poles by repurchasing the New Mark from the last Grand Master, Louis von Erlichshausen, for a very pretty sum, whereby he laid it as a solemn charge upon his successors "that the said land, the New Mark, should belong to German territory and to the worshipful Electorate of the Mark of Brandenburg, with which it was incorporated at the institution of the Electorate, and should so remain, and should never pass to those who speak not the German tongue."

In addition he skilfully rounded off the Mark by new conquests on the frontiers of Mecklenburg and Magdeburg, and was, indeed, altogether a far better father to his "pounce-box" than his own father had ever been, who in the midst of his rich Frankish lands had always thought a little contemptuously of the "North Polar Fief" which had chanced to come his way. "My father was lord of many lands, I of only one," said "the Iron-Tooth" one day to ambassadors from the Teutonic Order when they argued that his father Frederick would have insisted far less obstinately on his possession of the Mark. Nevertheless, the son, like the father, lost all pleasure in his dreary northern wastes when he had blunted his "iron tooth" in warfare with the Poles, the arch-enemies of Prussia and Brandenburg in those days. After the fruitless siege of Stettin, which was not destined to be taken till the days of the Great Elector and even then to no purpose, Frederick "the Iron-Tooth" withdrew from the scene of conflict. The unfortunate campaign had involved him in money difficulties, under which his successors were to groan for some time to come, and at the armistice which he concluded with the Pomeranians he was constrained to employ the mediation of the hated Poles and their King. Having mourned ten years for his lovely, pale Polish bride, and having shed his last tears for

his lost Jadwiga beside the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, he had taken a Saxon Princess to wife; but this marriage, entered upon with a double object of seeking consolation and offering defiance, turned out very unhappily, and the only son and heir of the union died early. It was with a sigh of relief that Frederick left both his consort and the Mark of Brandenburg, where, as may be imagined, his despotic rule had won him little love. He felt himself a broken man, and, as his father had made over the country to him, so he, in his turn, surrendered it to his brother Albert, only a year his junior, but more full of vigour and vitality, after reserving for himself a fixed annual income of six thousand gulden and the castle of Plassenburg, set steeply on the hill-side above the little town of Kulmbach in Franconia.

"Only six thousand gulden," says Frederick the Great with emphasis in his history of his family, endeavouring to make this ancestor, who had refused the two crowns of Bohemia and Poland, appear as a noble-hearted philosopher and world-renouncer, and ignoring or ignorant of the fact that the earlier Frederick II, his Electoral namesake, liquidated, as it were, the debt-encumbered Brandenburgish enterprise, in order to avoid absolute bankruptcy.

The retired Elector, a better statesman than warrior as he once said of himself, did not live long to enjoy his late-purchased peace. Less than a year after he had made over the Mark to his proud brother death snatched the ex-second Elector of Brandenburg from his place of retreat. He died at Neustadt on the Aisch, well prepared for death no doubt, by long-standing melancholia. Near his bed hung the embroidered image of a swan, the symbol of the knightly Order he had founded. Pious and world-weary, "the Iron-Tooth" fixed his eyes upon it when the last anguish assailed him—upon the symbol of that bird which, according to the beliefs of his day, foreknowing the hour of its death, sings a song of the transitoriness of all things earthly.

ALBERT ACHILLES

(1414-1486)

ALBERT ACHILLES was one of the fine flowers of the Hohen-zollern stock, an intellectual, artistic, and brilliant Prince. It is true that he owed much to the inspiration of his time, a splendid epoch in whose womb the European Renaissance was already quickening. It was the age of the great Italian *condottieri*, mercenary captains and commanders, who, at the head of their mercenary troops, made of war a craft and a profession. Albert Achilles was such an one, a warrior, a swashbuckler, but on the grand scale. As the most talented and promising son of the first Elector of Brandenburg and "Elsa the Beautiful," his father had dispatched him to the Court of the Emperor Sigismund to receive a knightly education. At Pressburg, as page to Queen Barbara, he received instruction in all the arts and graces befitting the perfect knight and courtier, and particularly distinguished himself in the tourney, which, now that fire-arms were being introduced, was enjoying a last feverish outburst of popularity. Probably it was the laurel wreaths he won as sevenfold victor in the tournament that earned him the picturesque surname of "Achilles," with which he was first greeted by Pope Pius II when on a journey through Italy—a journey during which he evolved a theory of the consanguinity of his House with that of Colonna, based on the similarity of their escutcheons. "The origin of our house," he wrote from Italy to his brother Frederick in the Mark—he was an excellent letter-writer—"may thus be traced through Ancient Rome back to Troy and to King Aeneas!"

The chief among Albert's many ambitions was to become "Duke of the Franks," even as Caesar Borgia, his younger



ELECTOR ALBERT, "ACHILLES"

contemporary, and a far more ferocious and ruthless *arriviste* and *conquistador* even than he, was determined at all costs to be "Duke of Rome." This goal of Albert's, however, since it involved the subjection of the territories and cities on the Main, could only be achieved in despite of the Hohenzollerns' old opponents, the Nurembergers, and their resistance proved far stronger and more successful than that of the inhabitants of Berlin to his brother Frederick. The Frankish Achilles might plunder and burn unfortified villages and fields, but in the decisive fray the Nurembergers struck hardest. When, later, he fought for his dream of a Frankish dukedom against all the forces of Emperor and Empire, it took no less than seventeen princes and a king to defeat him—a fact which, a gamecock to the last, he loved proudly to emphasize in explanation of his failure. Life to him was one continual joust and tourney, and the warlike strain in the Hohenzollern blood that can never be happy away from the smell of powder no doubt derives chiefly from this ancestor. In an interval of fighting he undertook, like his brother, the customary pilgrimage to Jerusalem in expiation of his sins, and there, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at the hour of midnight, he received knighthood at the hand of his brother, John the Alchemist—a solemn occasion which some of his more romantic descendants, such as Frederick William IV and William II, may well have envied him.

As to the Mark which had been made over to him by his debt-laden brother Frederick, he troubled himself about it as little as might be. From the first he allowed his eldest son John to hold sway there, and John, assisted by his Chancellor, Frederick Sesselmann, Bishop of Lebus, made an indifferent job of it. Albert in the meantime, eternal swashbuckler that he was, had involved himself with Matthias Corvinus, the powerful King of Hungary, in a quarrel that seriously jeopardized the Hohenzollerns' newly acquired ascendancy in the Mark. The Hungarian

monarch hounded on all who could be persuaded to make war on Albert to fall upon Brandenburg. Menaced by the Pomeranians with a stiffening of Hungarian mercenaries, the twenty-two-year-old John besought his warlike father to come and bring him aid in the threatened Mark. Messenger after messenger hurried southwards to Ansbach, where Albert Achilles, the tall, handsome, and bearded hero, sat banqueting with his Knights of the Order of the Swan—for he had transplanted his brother's foundation to South Germany—and drinking toasts to chivalric love and the knightly virtues. The cries of the son, terrified by the overwhelmingly superior force of the enemy, became ever more urgent, until the father, nominally Elector of the Mark, but far fonder of the pleasant meadows on the banks of the Rezat than of all the sandy and desert waste between Elbe and Oder, at last decided to go to his aid. Rejoicing in the prospect of a fight, he advanced with twenty thousand mounted men, and by his powerful onslaughts speedily reburnished his bright name of Achilles. He made short work of the Pomeranians, but the more numerous hordes of Hungarians proved a tougher problem.

It was then that Elector Albert bethought him of his second surname, that of "Ulysses," one bestowed on him for his cunning by the humanists of Germany. "*Vulpes Germaniae*," "the Fox of Germany," as he had already been christened by Reuchlin, seeing the futility of armed contest against his numerical, and even intellectual, superior, Matthias Corvinus, entered upon negotiations. He came to the best agreement he could with the Hungarian, but to his wrath that monarch made another pact with his son behind his back. "Let my son be informed," wrote the infuriated and now ageing Achilles (who all his life had kept a strict hand over his son), "that he is still too young and foolish to conclude treaties. He would have done better to go hunt the boar than to meddle with this pen-and-ink business of mine!" There is a harshness of tone here which

we shall later find was employed frequently enough by Hohenzollern fathers to their sons.

To Albert Achilles the Mark was no more than a purse hung about his neck, from which he endeavoured to extract as much money as possible. An even more formidable enemy to the cities and their rights than his brother Frederick, Achilles repeatedly wrung tribute from the greater municipalities. He devised a method of taxation by tonnage, the precursor of the excise duties later imposed by the Great Elector—that is to say, he levied tolls on all wares, such as beer, herrings, tea, wine, etc., sold by the ton or barrel.

The towns had no love for this electoral extortioner, who never appeared among them except to brawl or raise money by taxation, and on the occasion of his second marriage with a Saxon Princess they expressed their feelings by refusing to make him the customary grant. The whole country at that time seethed with revolt against the Hohenzollern rulers, and it was the tact of the Chancellor, Bishop Sesselmann, that alone succeeded in preserving some sort of order. More than once the worthy Sesselmann was on the point of resigning, but foxy Albert Ulysses always found some way of inducing him to change his mind and remain at his son's side. At the same time it never occurred to the Elector to put his hand in his own pocket to provide his son with anything over and above the extremely modest expenses of his little Court at Berlin. Although since the death of his brother, "the Alchemist," he had added prosperous Bayreuth to his Frankish dominions, and had become an exceedingly wealthy prince, he showed distinct signs of that close-fistedness where his son was concerned that was to recur so frequently among later Hohenzollerns. His principle was—and all Sesselmann's remonstrances and statistics were insufficient to wean him from it—that the Court of the Mark must depend on the Mark for support. The greatest benefit that Albert Achilles Ulysses conferred

on his children and descendants was the family enactment which he committed to parchment on his last visit to the Spree. This was the *Dispositio Achillea*, a solemn family arrangement by which, in case of several heirs, the eldest should have the Mark, while the Frankish lands should be divided among the younger sons; the Disposition shows, incidentally, that the third Hohenzollern lord of Brandenburg considered, at the end of his reign, that that "third part of his realm," as he himself called it, was too petty an affair to make provision for more than one heir. Unfortunately a number of his successors failed to regard this document as binding upon themselves, but looked upon it, with the glozing eye of a Bethmann, as a mere "scrap of paper" to be set aside as occasion seemed to require!

The Elector Albert certainly had no lack of offspring; nineteen children were born of his two marriages. A year before his death he told the aged Emperor Frederick III, with whom, after his irascible fashion, he was on good and bad terms alternately, that he would leave his sons an income of seventy thousand gulden in Franconia and of fifty thousand in the Mark. There was, no doubt, an element of boasting and exaggeration in this, for he was a gentleman who loved pleasure and display, and kept open house in his brilliant Court at Ansbach (his castle there was unfortunately destroyed by fire early in the eighteenth century), where a sprinkling of the intellectuals of the day was not wanting. More especially in later life, and in connection with his marriage with the Saxon Princess, to whom he wrote some of the most magnificent love letters that have come down to us from the late Middle Ages, this Royal bravo showed a bent to higher things. He had plenty of moral as well as physical courage, was far from being under the thumb of the clergy, and more than once ran the risk of excommunication when determined to have his own way.

Though tormented by the gout, to which from time to

time the pleasure-loving, forceful old man was a victim, the Elector, at seventy-two years of age, set out intrepidly to attend the Reichstag at Frankfort. "As pious princes we will follow in the bold footsteps of our forefathers, and are persuaded that, if we doubt not, no ill can befall us." His own father, the first Elector of Brandenburg, had not flinched from just such a journey in old age in order to record his electoral vote; his son had been governing the Mark these ten years as Regent; Albert's house was in order; and though the grizzled Emperor had spent years of slow decline in Vienna and Linz pottering over astrology, alchemy, botany, and such secular matters, why should he not do him the friendly service of casting his Imperial vote for his son, the Archduke Maximilian, that last of the knights who was to bequeath his obstinacy, his hook-nose, and thick, pendulous underlip as the characteristic inheritance of the House of Habsburg for centuries to come? Had not Albert, like his father before him, spent years in the Imperial service as councillor and steward? Had he not, after all, drawn pay for these services from the mental deficient who called himself Frederick III? As a true warrior and as Commander of the Imperial forces the Elector had been loyal to the shedding of blood, and he deeply engrafted the idea of subjection to the Habsburgs as a sacred charge upon his descendants—a fact which his great-great-grandson, Frederick the Great, forgot perhaps when he sang the heroic deeds of this ancestor! As a good Emperor's man, then, Albert gave his voice at Frankfort for Maximilian, and the latter at once took over the reins of government from his enfeebled father. "We will cleave to him whom God has given us to be our lord here upon earth, leaving aside all vain imaginings." When the election was over and the Electors were seated at the coronation banquet, the Saxon Elector Ernest reminded his cousin of Brandenburg of how his father, the late first Elector of Brandenburg, had flattered himself for a time that *he* might

be elected Emperor here in Frankfort, and smilingly presumed to wonder whether Albert himself, "Achilles Ulysses," did not, at times, feel himself to be of the stuff of which Roman Kings are made? "Well, why not, Cousin Saxony?" winked Albert to the Wettiner. "But in that job a man must be even more a Ulysses than an Achilles, if he is to be able to cope with you Electors!"

As he left the Römerberg the stately old man suddenly fell forward with a great clatter of armour. It was thought at first that his spurs had tripped him on the paving-stones of the Imperial City, and that he had merely added another scar or so to the many he bore already; but when they lifted him up they saw that he was dead. It was the sympathetic Wettiner, destined to follow him six months later, who delivered his short funeral oration: "The age of knighthood is past."

JOHN CICERO

(1455-1499)

JOHN CICERO was a far milder ruler than his father, "Achilles" of Ansbach, to whom the rattle of harness and the clank of mail on mail was the sweetest of music. John was frequently bedridden, and ultimately died at an early age of heart disease, a complaint that has brought many of his family to a premature grave. Nevertheless, he was a big fellow with a large, powerful frame, called "Magnus," "the Great," or "the Strong," by his contemporaries until the period of the humanists and their cult of the classics brought him a new surname—that of Cicero. The story goes that he earned it by holding forth for four hours in Latin in his endeavour to bring about a reconciliation between the Kings of Poland, Hungary, and Bohemia, the audience shouting enthusiastically, "A Cicero! He is a true Cicero!" Thus Melanchthon; but others declare the little story to be pure fiction, and say that John, surnamed Cicero, grew up as a horseman and hunter, with no leaning to the Muses, and with as strong an aversion to Latinity as his far-off successor William II. However this may be, we certainly have, apart from his scholarly surname, very little evidence of John's artistic or scientific leanings. Upon Melanchthon's pious fable Frederick the Great made the malicious and foolish remark that, as a matter of fact, his ancestor's eloquence had less to do with the reconciliation of the three warring monarchs than the six thousand troopers with which, in the Saxon Elector's company, he had invaded Silesia, declaring that whichever of the three Kings refused to listen to his peaceable counsels would become his enemy and Saxony's. "A Prince who can settle disputes by force of arms," adds Frederick, "is

always a powerful dialectician—a Hercules who convinces by blows of the cudgel.” This detestable comment, designed to promulgate the gospel of the superiority of the sword to the spirit, has been too often falsified by history to need any further examples for its refutation.

John was the first of his House really to care for the Mark of Brandenburg, and he was the first to be buried there; he rests in Berlin Cathedral beneath an artistic monument in bronze, the work of Peter Vischer. His three Hohenzollern predecessors in the Electorate, together with their regents, felt more at home in the South than on the yellow sands or in the dark forests of the North. John actually did more for his country than merely wring taxes from it, as previous Hohenzollern rulers had done. It is true that he extracted what he could from the Mark for himself and his Court, and he succeeded, where his haughty and masterful father had failed, in extorting the first indirect tax, the so-called “beer-tax” or “tribute,” which appropriated to the Electoral Crown a groat on every barrel of hop- or malt-brew. But at least the money remained in the country, and after some resistance, particularly in Stendal and the Old Mark, people got used to this toll, the “*Biergeld*,” and it remained a permanent institution in Brandenburg for centuries.

The Elector John was, upon the whole, not unpopular in his domains, largely because he centred his interests in the Mark, and had as little as possible to do with foreign affairs. He was an invalid, one may conjecture, from an early age, very much as was George William, father of the Great Elector, and he preferred amicable negotiations to warfare as a means of gaining his ends. In this matter he was not infrequently successful. He was condemned for a weakling because of his conciliatory inclinations, yet for all that it was admitted at a contemporary Reichstag that “Brandenburg had enjoyed no small reputation in the Empire for the past eighty years.” It was John who gave



ELECTOR JOHN, "CICERO"

the *coup de grâce* to the vendetta system, which in his day (1495) was declared illegal in the Empire by Maximilian's "*Ewiger Landfriede*," a proclamation of the public peace in perpetuity. He also broke what remained of the power of the robber-knights of the Mark—that is, as far as it could ever be broken in these gentlemen's families, which even down to Bismarck's times and our own have been inclined to regard whatever ordinances of the State they happened to dislike as not binding upon them. From time to time these "noblemen" would ally themselves with actual robber-bands, as did Kunz von Kaufungen in Saxony about that date, or would even form such bands among themselves, anticipating Schiller's romantically conceived robber chieftain, Karl Moor. At the same time some of the grandees of the Mark, for want of other employment, began to take to agriculture. At first they exploited their living capital, their peasantry, without conscience and without shame, torturing and harrying them worse than beasts, until the goaded human souls within the unhappy wretches rose, clamouring for mercy to the God of all the earth and to the Crucified, in the terribly repressed insurrections known as the "*Deutsche Bauernkriege*." It was in 1484, that is in the reign of John Cicero, that the nobility of the Old Mark made it illegal for anyone to take in, or give shelter to, wandering peasants leaving their lords without their consent, thus reducing their status to the infamous one of serfdom. This degrading institution persisted till the days of Stein and Hardenberg, those "two unnatural West German noblemen," as they were called by their contemporaries in Mecklenburg. With an insolence and brutality which must surely be unprecedented, the gentlemen of Brandenburg and of the East bank of the Elbe were wont to argue that the lot of the peasants had, after all, never been a bed of roses, more especially in wartime, and that this class had always been subject more than any other to violence, pillage, and degradation!

As a landlord himself John Cicero usually took the part of his Markish nobility; he made them his councillors in preference to the Frankish officials his father and grandfather had imported into the country, and even created some of them doctors of jurisprudence. Eitelwolf von Stein and Busso von Alvensleben, whose images, hewn in marble, still attend their marble lord on John's monument in the Siegesallee, were two such councillors whose proud names have survived in the Mark to this day. His Chancellor, pious Sesselmann's successor, was, it is true, of Frankish origin, a scholar, and the last cleric to adorn the post. He was called a "hired doctor" by the less-learned gentlemen of the Mark, on whom, as on all Germany at that time, Roman Law was being forced instead of the magnificent native law to be found in the Old Saxon Code.

John, however, with his surname of "*Cicero Germanicus*" committing him to the veneration of classical antiquity, could scarcely oppose the scholars, and consequently did nothing to hinder the introduction of that divine code, the *corpus juris* by which the Roman Emperors had administered justice of old. On the contrary, he did all he could to prepare the way for this documented and well-established code, and it was formally introduced into the Mark under his son as the "Constitution of Joachim." It was thus that the German people, having lost their old faith some few hundred years earlier, now allowed themselves to be robbed of their own good laws.

Although John, the Cicero of the Mark, had no great appetite for the splendid heritage of Art and Science renescent in Europe in his day, he did not oppose the New Learning. On his early death-bed he even attempted to read *The Ship of Fools*, Sebastian Brant's great satiric poem, poring over it with his serious brown eyes when told that it had delighted the Emperor Maximilian. But his voyage to Fooldom did not progress very well—his own last journey

was too near. "I wish," he said to the councillors assembled about him, "that my death could be kept from my fifteen-year-old son Joachim; at least till he reaches the age at which my father Albert gave me independent rule over Brandenburg. I was one-and-twenty then; and now, at only forty-four, I have to make way for a child!"

JOACHIM I

(1484-1535)

“JOACHIM was surnamed ‘Nestor’ as Louis XIII was surnamed ‘the Just,’ namely, for no ostensible reason whatever.” It is with this good witticism that Frederick the Great begins his life of this ancestor—only a few sentences long—in the family history he dedicated to his favourite brother Henry. In actual fact Joachim is said to have earned his picturesque Renaissance nickname by his foresight and prudence at councils, on which occasions, of course, the loquacious old Nestor of the *Iliad* was wont to hold forth at great length. His father had justified his name of “Cicero” by giving his son an excellent education, so that Joachim spoke Latin, Italian, and French, as well as German, and amazed even that skilled linguist, the Emperor Charles V, Maximilian’s grandson. His tutor, Dietrich von Bülow, Sesselmann’s successor in the see of Lebus, recognized the boy’s wilfulness at an early age. Joachim was the youngest Hohenzollern to accede to the throne; he was fifteen years old at the time of his accession, five years younger than the Great Elector, thirteen years younger than the Great Fritz, and fourteen years younger than William II, when they respectively assumed the reins of government. He showed his wilful, stubborn nature immediately by coldly and obstinately refusing his uncle of Ansbach’s well-meant proposal to take him under his guardianship in accordance with the provisions of the *Dispositio Achillea*. With a severity far greater than his father’s Joachim next proceeded against the still restless and insurgent nobility of the Mark, those aristocratic disturbers of the peace who, despite the “Public Peace” of the wise Emperor Maximilian, would not give up the raids and pillagings that were the very



ELECTOR JOACHIM I, "NESTOR," 1529
After Lucas Cranach

breath of their nostrils. These gentlemen supposed that now that a boy, almost a child, sat on the throne of Brandenburg, they would once more enjoy the glorious old feudal times of the Quitzows. Grim disillusion awaited them, however, and they made lampoons on the boyish Elector, who with axe, dungeon, and halter chastized them more ruthlessly than any of his ancestors.

Joachimkin, Joachimkin
Look to thyself!
If we catch thee
We will hold thee.
If we hold thee
We will hang thee.
Joachimkin, Joachimkin
Look to thyself!

But Joachim would not be caught. He enforced his will with a strong arm, and compelled both baronage and towns to unconditional obedience. He hanged, drew, and quartered the robber-knight who had made that little ballad on him and hung it in the Elector's very sleeping-chamber, and caused his head to be stuck above the Köpenick Gate of his capital, Berlin. He went much farther than his great-uncle, Frederick II, in that he nominated the police of the towns at his princely pleasure, with the result that municipal self-government became a dead letter in the Mark for three hundred years, and the councillors mere officers of the Crown. Even the higher clergy found his rule no laughing matter. Joachim appointed the bishops at his will and pleasure, and forced those who did not satisfy him to lay down their offices with scant ceremony. Personally he was a ruffian, as can be read in the tight, suspicious lips and coarse skin of his portraits. In Berlin, which his father had made the permanent home of the Hohenzollerns, he instigated a persecution of the Jews that horrified even the Pope in Rome. Fifty poor Jews—the richer ones had for the most part withdrawn to Poland

and Russia, "the more civilized and charitable East"—were broken on the wheel or burned in the new market-place in Berlin, where the Luther monument proudly stands to-day.

The new Protestant doctrine found no bitterer opponent than Joachim; this member of the Royal House of Hohenzollern, destined so often in the future to prove the refuge of Protestantism, hated Luther and his supporters with an almost animal fury. At the last Reichstag at Augsburg, which Joachim attended in 1530, when Melancthon presented his *Confessio Augustana*, and almost half Germany was already Lutheran, the Hohenzollern heaped such violent abuse upon the Wittenberg heretic and his false doctrine that even that staunch Catholic, the Emperor Charles V, had to ask him to be more moderate. Joachim had private reasons for his hatred of Luther, his wife Elizabeth, who was estranged from him, having secretly adopted the new doctrine. The responsibility for this was largely his own, for he had driven his wife from his side to make room for a mistress, and carried on a public liaison, like that of his successor Frederick William II, with a Berlin townswoman. On this point Luther was less tender with the Catholic Prince than with the Protestant Landgrave of Hesse, to whom he permitted bigamy, and he did his best to set Joachim's wife against the Brandenburgish sinner. Meanwhile, she secretly received the Sacrament in both kinds, and eventually escaped the rough treatment at her brutal husband's hands, which would certainly have followed the announcement of her conversion, by a hasty flight to the Court of Saxony, where Protestantism was already long established. Joachim was left to rage and foam against the Lutheran heresy with all the violence of his nature, and in this matter almost outdid his youngest brother, named Albert after his grandfather. This second Albert, upon whom certain later evangelical pastors have been anxious to fix the not very flattering surname of "Jesuites," was a most astute person.

Becoming Archbishop of Magdeburg at three-and-twenty, he there blossomed out as a patron of learning and the Fine Arts on a scale which far eclipsed even his grandfather Achilles' sumptuous Court. But how was he to raise money for this prodigal expenditure? The Hohenzollern Archbishop hit upon the expedient of sending Tetzl, the priest, to peddle his box of indulgences through the land. The moneys thus contributed by the faithful for their souls' salvation found their way for the most part into Archbishop Albert's coffers, and as, in addition to his present expenses, the prodigious bribes which had brought him the Magdeburg Bishopric so early had left him encumbered with old debts, Tetzl had to rattle his collecting-box louder and louder to keep the supply of "soul-money" flowing freely for his master. The Archbishop's continual demand for money, and yet more money, was, therefore, the motive force behind the impudent little clerical pedlar who patrolled the country-side with his sing-song cry of

No sooner your coin in the box doth ring
Than your cleansed soul to Heaven doth spring.

It was Luther's Ninety-five Theses, as we all know, that stopped the mouth of this traveller in indulgences and of his lord; yet Albert, who had been on friendly terms for a time with Reuchlin and Hutten, dallied for a time with the Wittenberg Nightingale's new doctrine, and it took the Peasants' Rising and his fears for his own power and comfort to reconfirm him in his Catholicism. Meanwhile, his Bishopric of Magdeburg fell away more and more to the new teaching, soul after soul accepting Luther's creed; and Albert, having failed in his daring plan of becoming Papal nuncio to Germany, was fortunate in acquiring the Archbishopric of Mayence. In Mayence, Albert, now a cardinal, threw himself into the arms of the Jesuits. He assisted that Order so vigorously in its campaign against the Lutheran heretics, providing them with an active zealot in Canisius,

the second Boniface of the Germans, as Catholics call him, that this spiritual Prince of Hohenzollern stock has every right to stand as the founder, under Heaven, of Jesuitism in Germany, and as its first and most powerful patron. Albert eventually left this world for his appropriate paradise, amidst the continuous muttering of Latin prayers in Aschaffenburg, where the pious poet Brentano was to make a similar end in years to come.

Though Albert did much to prevent the Catholic and Lutheran factions in Germany from coming to any understanding, his brother Joachim proved an even bitterer enemy of the new teaching. At the Diet of Worms, from which Luther escaped despite Joachim's efforts to destroy him, he did all he could still further to incense the Emperor, already sufficiently a heresy-hunter, and afterwards privately persuaded him to antedate the Edict of Worms, the better to nip Protestantism in the bud. It was at his instigation that the Papal and Imperial bans were launched against his cousin, another Albert of Hohenzollern, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, who on Luther's advice had transformed his spiritual and knightly domain into a lay duchy and feudal dependency of Poland. Joachim would not, probably, have taken this last so ill if Albert and all his subjects had not gone over to Protestantism, for the brutal and intolerant ruler of Brandenburg was not squeamish about a man's sale of himself. On the occasion of the Imperial election he had hawked himself and his vote to the scandal of all Germany. He was the first Hohenzollern to take bribes from a King of France, which he did for years on end (though the Great Elector was later to pursue this policy on a grander scale), but this did not prevent him from coquetting concurrently with the House of Habsburg, causing the Emperor Charles to observe that that fellow of Brandenburg seemed to be for ever running about with an outstretched palm. When, however, the Imperial election actually took

place at Frankfort, Joachim found himself under the unhappy necessity of giving his vote, not to Francis I, who had bought and paid for it, but to Maximilian's grandson, that same Charles V whose ear he afterwards assailed continuously with proposals for putting down the heretics; for the free Frankforters within whose walls he lodged would otherwise have made themselves very unpleasant to the Hohenzollern ruler, whose venality the very sparrows of their city proclaimed from the house-tops. After the Battle of Pavia, letters and pacts which Joachim had exchanged with Francis and other enemies of the Emperor fell into Charles's hands, and he—who had never really trusted the Brandenburg Elector—saw his suspicions confirmed in black and white.

Joachim, however, freely absolved himself and others of even the blackest crimes so long as they remained loyal to the old and only true faith. In his opinion an anti-Lutheran might do what he would—his soul was secure of salvation. Mistrustful as he was by nature, he was plagued to the end of his passionately lived and not very long life by anxiety as to whether his two sons, Joachim and Hans, would remain staunch Catholics. His own wife had already succumbed to the Satan of Wittenberg; Cousin Albert of Prussia had done the same; and the Hohenzollerns of the Frankish line had already, for the most part, subscribed to Protestantism. How could he be sure that his sons, in spite of the oaths he repeatedly extracted from them, would not also become recreant Lutherans? Oppressed by this fear, the tyrannical Prince, cross-grained and obstinate as he had been from childhood, set aside his grandfather's domestic statute, the *Dispositio Achillea*, a year before his death, by a will leaving the Electoral Mark to his elder son, Joachim, and the New Mark to the younger, Hans. "It is impossible," reasoned Joachim, the arch-Catholic, no whit behind Torquemada in narrow-mindedness and hatred of the smell of heresy, "it is impossible that *both*

should forsake the faith I have again and again engrafted upon them." At Stendal, his favourite city and one which was already beginning to grow loyal in sentiment, Joachim died, cursing Lutheranism. From his youth Joachim, like Wallenstein, had trusted in astrology and omens, and shortly before his death had cast his own horoscope and prophesied that he would go to the grave at seventy. He died at the age of fifty-two; his education at the University of Frankfort-on-Oder and certain dabbings in the sciences notwithstanding, he was a man of narrow mind and limited intellect all his life. One of his physicians, a Jew, whom he tolerated about his person for his great ability despite his hatred of the Hebrew's race, suspected his lord's approaching end some weeks previously, and secretly had his sons informed. When asked why he had not given the Elector's Royal self some hint of his approaching dissolution, the Jew replied: "It would have been as much as my life was worth! In return for my prophecy that raging tyrant would have burned me alive, if he could, in the market-place, where the charred remains of my fellow-believers still pollute the air!"

JOACHIM II AND HANS VON KÜSTRIN

(1505-1571)

(1513-1571)

A PIOUS legend relates that Joachim II, visiting the great Dr. Martin Luther at Wittenberg as a thirteen-year-old boy in company with his mother, already a secret convert to Protestantism, was powerfully impressed, and that the impression then received determined the whole future course of his life. It is, indeed, probable that the young prince, who had grown up amidst the constant discords of his parents' home, was deeply affected both by the reformer's strong personality and by the charm and gracious unity of the Lutheran household, an aroma of which seems to linger even to-day about the old Augustinian monastery at Wittenberg.

Nevertheless, when the new Elector Joachim assumed the ermine in his thirtieth year, he appeared to be a person devoid of sentiment, and little given to the tenderer emotions. He had inherited, as his portraits suggest, a tendency to gloom from his father, but in him this was conjoined with a certain indolence and love of ease that caused him, like Frederick William II, to meet the troubles of his times and the complaints of his subjects with bored inertia. In one matter, however, he was ready to meet the urgent wishes of his people, already almost universally, if secretly, Lutheran, despite the first Joachim's harsh measures; he adopted the new faith, and, incidentally, by so doing broke a great number of solemn oaths sworn to his father, living and dying. On All Saints' Day, 1539, he received Communion in both kinds in Berlin Cathedral, an historic occasion frequently and affectingly rendered by Prussian painters of the Evangelical persuasion. Yet neither his personal piety nor his attachment to Luther was very

great. He actually attempted to pave the way for an understanding between the two religious parties in Germany, the Catholic and the Lutheran, an attempt which testifies both to his political good sense, and to his love of peace and quiet. "My Church of Brandenburg," he announced, "shall be neither Wittenbergish nor Roman, but Christian." Charles V's fanatical Spanish temperament, however, would not hear of any such compromise.

Joachim's consort did not follow her husband's example by embracing Lutheranism. She was a Polish princess, and showed no inclination to forsake the faith of her forbears. Even apart from this difference the relations between the Elector and his second wife—the first died before his accession—do not appear to have been very affectionate. His Electoral Highness greatly preferred the company of the beautiful widow of a Berlin gunsmith, the complaisant Anna Sydow, who would accompany her lover on the chase clad in a man's leather riding-breeches. Joachim's subjects actually ventured to admonish him on his persistently scandalous way of life, and suggested that he should give more of his time to affairs of State and less to idling about the woods; they were rewarded for their interference with the same insulting answer that Götz von Berlichingen made to the Emperor's emissary. As he grew older Joachim II became more and more spendthrift and prodigal, a luxury-loving hedonist, living recklessly and supporting a crowd of favourites who did the same. "His generosity degenerated into prodigality," complains Frederick the Great in his family history. Joachim employed an excellent architect, Caspar Theyss, to build him the hunting-box "*Grüne-wald*," where the merry gunmaker's widow spent many a night with her Royal lover. Under his orders Theyss reconstructed the Castle of Berlin, begun by Frederick II, his great-great-uncle, providing it with a fine façade and bay in the Renaissance taste, and he also laid the foundations of the new Berlin Cathedral on the site of a confiscated



ELECTOR JOACHIM II, "HECTOR"

Dominican monastery. The money for all this building, for his costly way of living and his Court, came, of course, from his subjects, whom he had a knack of managing adroitly enough when it suited his interests. Some say that it was to please them that he abandoned the Catholicism his father had held so rigidly. However this may be, he fleeced his people to the best of his ability, and raised a large sum by increasing the tonnage duty which John Cicero, his grandfather, had brought into operation. In addition he was able to command the services of a certain Jew named Lippold, his personal physician and Master of the Mint, who had the faculty of divining and opening up quite new and unsuspected veins of gold for his master.

As a young man the name of "Hector" had been bestowed on him for leading two thousand Brandenburgish troopers to aid the Emperor against the Turks. The Emperor Charles V himself gave the name, and knighted the new Hector in his own Imperial person. Yet the name of "Nestor" would have suited him far better than it did his fanatical father, for Joachim, indeed, did not particularly distinguish himself as a warrior, and was the laughing-stock of his fellow-knights whenever he appeared, outwardly point-device and clad in the most shining of shining armour, to take command. On these occasions he strikingly resembled William II, who, without any thorough knowledge of military science, liked to take the lead in manœuvres, and execute stylish but perfectly pointless and absurd cavalry attacks. On one of his later campaigns against the Turks, Joachim managed to cover himself with ridicule, and had to return to Berlin without so much as a single laurel leaf. In negotiations and discussions, on the contrary, he frequently evinced the really remarkable capacities of the founder of his dynasty, Frederick, the first Elector of Brandenburg. In the person of Lambert Distelmeyer, moreover, the unspoiled scholar son of a Leipzig tailor, he possessed a Chancellor who acquired for his

Elector two things destined to have a great and increasing influence on the Hohenzollern future—namely, the part-enfeoffment of the Duchy of Prussia, and the prospective inheritance of Cleves and Jülich. Joachim II, Lutheran though he was, was better able to manage the difficult and unexpansive Emperor Charles than his ultra-Catholic father had ever been. After the Emperor's crushing victory at Mühlberg, Joachim conducted the negotiations between Charles V and the defeated German Princes, and even patched up a temporary agreement between the parties, though subsequently Maurice of Saxony's breach of faith secured the "liberty" of the petty rulers at the cost of an Empire in fragments. Joachim also emphatically supported the "Augsburg Interim," at that time being forced upon the Protestants of Germany, permitting them the marriage of priests and Communion in both kinds, but requiring them in other and more fundamental matters to retain the doctrine and ecclesiastical polity of the Catholic Church. All this was quite to Joachim's mind; he was anxious to retain as many of the customs and usages of the old Church as possible. Easy-going and peaceable, his hairy, leathery visage became, as he aged, more and more like that of an amiable old watch-dog. It is a pleasing thought that he, of all men, introduced under pressure of circumstances a settlement of Church affairs in Brandenburg that not only contented his subjects, but actually received the sanction and praise of *both* Luther and the Emperor Charles! When Magdeburg fell after offering obstinate resistance to the Interim, Joachim, who had taken the city by the Emperor's commands, proved so indulgent and conciliatory a conqueror that Charles hammered on the table with fury when he heard of it; but in the estimation of his time the easy-going and loquacious, but not ignoble, Joachim's clemency and "connivance" did him no harm.

The younger brother, Hans von Küstrin, who by his father's crazy arrangement ruled the New Mark, won far

greater military distinction than his brother. Joachim I had been so foolish as to think that since the days of his father Albert Achilles the revenues of Brandenburg had increased sufficiently to support two separate Courts in the Mark. This miscalculation was soon made evident by the eldest son Joachim's falling ever deeper into debt, with the result that his subjects had to make good a deficit of some five millions during his reign, and his son and successor was left heavily encumbered. Meanwhile, the second son, Hans von Küstrin, found it impossible to live on the revenues of the New Mark, and saw himself obliged for a time to take service as a captain of mercenaries under the Emperor or some other great lord. Eventually, like his ancestor, the Burgrave of Nuremberg, he accepted a permanent appointment under Charles V with the title of "Domestic Councillor," and a salary of five thousand talers. For a time he was known as "the eye and the council of Germany." His favourite recreation was the harmless one of dicing with his Court physician. Protestant historians have been wont to boast that Hans von Küstrin embraced the new, the true, the primitive gospel and teaching more purposefully and genuinely than his luxury-loving brother Joachim, who did not like to see the churches stripped of their bright pictures. If so, his convictions did not prevent him from fighting for the Emperor and against the Protestants in the wars of the Schmalkaldic League of Princes against Charles V. Accompanied by his brother Joachim, he led three hundred troopers and four thousand arquebusiers to the standard of Charles, then at the height of his brilliant career, and received substantial payment for so doing in advance. The cause of the subsequent breach between the brothers and the increasingly fanatical Emperor was the latter's own tyrannical and intolerant behaviour, and in this connection an attractive story is told of brother Joachim. After the victory of Mühlberg, when Charles enticed his opponent, the Landgrave of

Hesse, into his camp under cover of an ambiguous promise of safe conduct, Joachim joined in going surety for his fellow prince. The Emperor, following the disgraceful example of his predecessor, Emperor Sigismund, the murderer of Huss next proposed, with the concurrence of the Spanish grandees, to break his pledged word, whereupon the doughty Joachim, like a true German, fell upon the Duke of Alba and Cardinal Granvella sword in hand, and only the intervention of the Emperor's suite prevented him from bringing the two Latin reprobates to a reckoning.

Hans, like his elder brother, later adopted the cause of the liberties of the German Princes, but, unlike his brother, he rejected the Interim which the Emperor attempted to force upon the Protestants, adopting the catch then current in Germany,

*"Weg mit dem Interim,
Es hat den Schalk hinter ihm."*

("Away with the Interim,
The Rascal's behind it.")

Honest Hans refused to take part in the splendid and provocative Corpus Christi procession which Charles arranged in connection with the Reichstag at Augsburg, and thereby very nearly brought upon himself the Landgrave of Hesse's fate, that of imprisonment. For a time, even after Mühlberg, the rash Lord of Küstrin thought of taking up the cudgels again with the Emperor, true to his principle of "Sword rather than pen—blood rather than ink." He fortified the capital of the New Mark and the little town of Peitz, where later many a prisoner of State was destined to languish, the good Danckelmann among them. But it was, nevertheless, the treacherous Maurice of Saxony and not the thick-headed Hans, unwilling to negotiate with the French or combine with these arch-enemies of Germany against his Imperial lord, who engaged in open hostilities with Charles.

There is another giant Hohenzollern who, as a turbulent, blustering ghost, haunts that distracted period of religious conflict in Germany—one Albert, of the Kulmbach line, to whom his humanistic contemporaries gave the proud surname of "Alcibiades." He was a *conquistador* by nature like his predecessor and cousin, Albert Achilles, and fought sometimes for, and sometimes against, the Emperor. Again like Achilles, he pursued for a few years the ambitious dream of becoming Duke of the Franks, but the fortunes of war were against him. That particular disturber of the peace was beaten in a decisive battle by Maurice of Saxony (who lost his own life on the field), and ended as a miserable exile under the roof of a Royal relative in Pforzheim.

In pleasing contrast with the background of continual unrest presented by the Empire of those days stands the peaceable figure of another Hohenzollern, one of the Frankish line, the Margrave George Frederick of Ansbach. This Margrave, having married Hans von Küstrin's daughter, played till his death the rôle of kindly and understanding uncle to the family, and exercised a particularly beneficial influence on John George, who, after the death of his father Joachim, followed into the Great Beyond ten days later by his uncle Hans, who left no son, once more reunited the Electoral and the New Marks under a single Electoral sceptre.

On the whole the impression left by this pair of Hohenzollern brothers, who managed to share the lands divided between them by their uncouth father for thirty-five years without a serious quarrel, is not an unpleasing one. In later years Hans von Küstrin proved an excellent economist and ruler, and when Frederick William I imprisoned his son, the young Fritz, in the fortress of Küstrin, he advised him to make a study of the old Margrave's papers. The two brothers steered their way through their distracted and mendacious century more creditably than most of their brother Princes of the League, and managed to rub along

well enough side by side, each in his little domain, till the time came for them both to lay by the ermine mantle within a few days of each other. "Tell my faithful brother Joachim, though I can hardly believe he is ill," said Hans von Küstrin, who had long been failing, when he received news of his brother's stroke, "that he must keep a place for me up in Heaven close to our dear Dr. Martin Luther—yes, and near himself as well. We have managed to get along very well in life; why not, then, in Eternity?"

JOHN GEORGE

(1525-1598)

EVENTS repeat themselves in the history of the House of Hohenzollern. While Joachim, the second Elector, builds, banquets, and squanders his substance in Berlin, John George, his frugal son, squats in the castle at Zechlin, a god-forsaken eyrie in the Mark, once the seat of the Bishops of Havelberg, muttering savagely at the old man's spend-thrift splendour—squats there lonely and niggardly, and listens, filled with sullen rage, to stories of the junketings and hunting-parties, the sports of venery, dances, and costly tourneys on the banks of the Spree, which his father, voluptuous and irresponsible, keeps up to the day of his death.

Less than half a century later Frederick William I, in sandy Wusterhausen, watched with a similar but still fiercer wrath the splendours of *his* pomp-loving parent, that first King of Prussia who wasted the revenues of the State on artists and such riff-raff, and paid out good coin of the Realm for Court festivities that blazed and vanished with the brevity of fireworks, leaving nothing behind but morning-after headaches and empty coffers. But whereas Frederick William I, the "Royal Sergeant-Major," found himself mounting the vacant paternal throne at the early age of five-and-twenty, John George had to wait till his forty-fifth year before death carried off the robust and wanton second Joachim. It was as a white-haired man, shortly to become a grandfather, that he at last found the Electoral sceptre within his grasp; and now it went hard, indeed, with the majority of those his father's favourites whom the son for so many years had hated from afar! To his father's mistress, the beautiful gunsmith's widow, John George behaved as vilely as did, later, Frederick William III

to "the Rietz," *his* father's Royal minion. The "Sydowsche" was forced to doff the fine leather riding-breeches that father Joachim's thick fingers had many a time stroked so tenderly, and was dragged in a hempen halter to Spandau, which an Italian master of ordnance had recently made the strongest fortress in the Mark. A certain Finance Minister of Brandenburg, who had advanced the old Elector moneys from his personal estate, was brutally abandoned to the mercy of his creditors. Joachim's Physician-in-Ordinary and Master of the Mint, one Lippold, a kind of Jew Süß of the Mark, was arrested upon an altogether preposterous indictment, absurd admissions were wrung from him upon the rack, and he was executed with horrible cruelty. The destruction of this poor devil on the crack-brained charge of having poisoned the late Elector, his benefactor, by sorcery was followed by a general proscription of the Jews throughout Brandenburg. The exclusion of that race from the Mark persisted till the days of the Great Elector, who, tolerant upon this point of religion as upon all, was the first to accept Jews again—Jew refugees, as it happened, from Vienna.

In all other matters, however, John George subsequently showed himself a clement and conciliatory lord enough. Having slaked his just rage against those whom he regarded as his father's false counsellors and evil angels, he succeeded in establishing a good understanding with Joachim's best adviser, his Chancellor Distelmeyer. Indeed, he actually promised the old man (one recalls Bismarck's efforts in later life on behalf of his Herbert) that his son Christian should succeed him in the Chancellorship. And John George kept his promise.

"*Æconomus*" ("the Frugal," "the Thrifty") history has called him, but "*Der Geizkragen*" ("the Skinflint") was the name given him by his father's creatures, who, for the most part unjustly, had been driven by him from their offices. He reunited in his person the Markish lands shared by his father



ELECTOR JOHN GEORGE, "THE ECONOMICAL"

and uncle, and, thanks to his retrenchments, the burden of debt left by his father was reduced to half a million gulden. In contrast with old Joachim II, who had lavished his money upon all and sundry who chanced to please him, his close-fisted offspring with the little crafty eyes thought twice before giving away a penny—and then did not do it. This gentleman with the trim white pointed beard was as careful in matters of personal conduct as he was with the revenues of his realm. In the matter of drink particularly, in those days the chief passion of his compeers, he exercised the severest self-control, with the result that, being a radically sound and hearty man, occasional attacks of illness notwithstanding, he attained a ripe old age, and enjoyed a reign of eight-and-twenty years. John George was one of those prudent princes who will consent to listen to advice. Despite his mature years when he took the reins of government in his hands, he was willing and glad to learn from those few of his father's servants in whom he had confidence. Lampert Distelmeyer, Joachim's first Minister, became his constant supporter in a conciliatory and sensible handling of public affairs. Deaf as he was, the grey-haired Elector never failed to lend an attentive ear to the words of the tailor's son; though he did not, on that account, always concur in the views of that far-seeing man, nor neglect to weigh matters for himself. In regard to religion John George stood stubbornly for primitive Lutheranism. It is true that for a short time he entered into a Confederation of Princes concluded in Torgau as a "*corpus Evangelicorum*," which was pledged to pursue a Protestant policy throughout Middle Germany, and involved lending support to Calvinists in Western Europe. But the old-fashioned Elector never felt quite happy in the new Confederation, and later he swore his children and grand-children, for the sake of their own and their country's happiness, to remain true to the Lutheran doctrinal formula, shortly afterwards laid down by a Concordat, which

proclaimed a strict severance between the Lutherans and the members of the Reformed Churches. In the main this document proceeded from the Electorate of Saxony, the original home of true and orthodox Lutheranism. The learned Elector Augustus, at that time Lord of Saxony, was John George's dearest friend; so much so, indeed, that there was a jest current in the Mark that before any important decision Elector John George always sent to Dresden to ask what he should do. It was the uncompromising and narrow attitude of the most frugal of all Brandenburg's Electors towards this question of Protestant union that first gave rise to discord between John George and his son, Joachim Frederick. Before he ascended the throne of the Mark, Joachim Frederick enjoyed thirty years of rule as vicegerent of the Archbishopric of Magdeburg, which had elected him its administrator. This gave him just such an occupation and a training as might well have been desired for each Crown Prince of Brandenburg-Prussia in turn before his accession. There in Magdeburg and Halle, where he entered upon this office in his grandfather's time, he came in touch with the Margrave George Frederick of Ansbach and also with the Count of Heidelberg, and took up with growing enthusiasm the idea of a reunion between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches. All this, however, was very ill-received by his father. The old man would not hear of any union with the Huguenots and the Dutch, since he, the circumspect, very rightly foresaw that the result would be to force himself and his country into European affairs, and into a course of policy hostile to the Emperor; for the Emperor and the House of Habsburg continued the resolute advocates of Papacy and Catholicism, and any connection with Calvinism must, therefore, necessarily lead to friction with the Empire. John George solemnly promised his Estates of the Realm (with whom, owing to his modest expenditure, his relations were most amicable) to enter into no treaty involving possible

danger without their knowledge and consent. And John George, living in his castle at Kölln on the Spree (which still enjoyed immunity, or, in plain language, "freedom" from municipal authority) in the manner of his fathers as the greatest landowner in the realm, held himself personally bound to keep his pledged word to the country—a sentiment which in after years aroused no echo but mocking laughter in the mind of his autocratic successor, Frederick the Great.

Joachim Frederick, however, son of this diehard Elector, found his cousin of Ansbach, George Frederick, who as guardian of, and vicegerent for, a melancholic Duke of Prussia had also assumed sovereign power in the East, a far more attractive model than the obstinate old father without an idea in his head beyond the frontiers of Brandenburg. There was the man for the electoral heir-apparent, this George Frederick, for ever forging plans, bestriding all Germany, carrying his affairs through adroitly and successfully, not only in his Frankish domains, but even far away in remote East Prussia! At first the old man exchanged jokes with his dear cousin of Saxony about this megalomania of his son, which aimed at amalgamating Luther and Calvin, at uniting the Elbe and the Rhine by marriage, and at yoking the Jülich lands with the Mark of Brandenburg. But as years went by John George, the creature of use and wont, began to find his heir-apparent's thirst for inclusiveness a burden and a nuisance. The consequence was that, two years before his death in the fullness of years, he made a will, which ran even more counter to the *Dispositio Achillea* than the will of the fanatical Joachim I. In this document not only did he make over New Brandenburg to one of the sons of his third marriage (incidentally be it noted that the old man had in the course of time brought twenty-three children into the world), but he also provided rich revenues for his grandchildren.

Joachim Frederick's first act, when the niggard father,

whom he had grown to hate very heartily, at last made way for him, was to set aside the old man's will. With even less tenderness or consideration than was shown in after years by the first King of Prussia in combatting the preposterous last dispositions of the Great Elector, the new ruler, already in his fifty-second year, resolved to disregard the instructions of his patently senile, not to say feeble-minded, sire, and he was hard enough to carry the business through unrelenting. When Chancellor Distelmeyer, son of the trusted and cherished tutelary genius of the former Elector, ventured to suggest that a documented, Royal, last will and testament, endorsed by the Emperor's self, carried, after all, some weight, the new Elector answered him, as insolently as William II might have done, "Here *my* will is the last!" Whereupon Distelmeyer junior remembered a tale his father had once told him. The young heir-apparent had been quarrelling again with the Elector. "Once we were feared, now we are a mockery and a laughing-stock," he had said. "What matter if the Evangelical Churches abroad are not quite of one mind with us upon the article of the Sacrament—they are fellow-members with us, and we are bound to help them!" Thus and thus had Joachim Frederick, in his lust for expansion, remonstrated with the old man. But John George had smiled calmly, as calmly as some four hundred years later William I was to smile at the extravagant ideas of his ambitious son, and had quietly observed: "To be great, to be feared—these things are nothing to me. But to be as far as possible independent—that I care for above all things! Beware, my son; oh, for your own sake and Brandenburg's, beware of overweening ideas!"

JOACHIM FREDERICK

(1546-1608)

JOACHIM FREDERICK began his reign in the Mark with an entirely new Ministerial personnel, for with even greater ruthlessness than his father before him he dismissed practically all his predecessor's advisers—Distelmeyer *filis* first of all—and replaced them by his Magdeburger councillors. His confidant, Johann von Löben, received the Chancellorship, while the most important office, that of Lord High Chamberlain, went to his bosom friend, Count Schlick, a Bohemian. Both these devoted gentlemen stand to this day, hewn in stone, like a pair of trusty steeds, behind his monument in the Siegesallee, and nod "Yea" and "Amen" to him, just as they did in life. Joachim Frederick, like his father, was an elderly youth when first he grasped the Electoral sceptre. Two-and-fifty winters had passed over his head—seven more, that is, than John George had counted when he at last came into his father's debts. As with John George, so with the elderly Joachim Frederick—after the first thorough innovations and fresh appointments to all the more important offices everything went on much as it had done in his father's time. More particularly the Elector did not, as the country had feared, take the step of going over to the Reformed Church. He abolished from divine service the old, still half Catholic ceremonial which the second Joachim, in his love of parade and the decorative in life, had suffered to remain. That, however, was practically the only change he made.

For the rest, he grew year by year more like the long-lived father whom he had regarded with such utter contempt in the days when the blood flowed hotter and swifter in his own veins. Though he took Calvinists into his service,

he was now as loyal to Lutheranism as he was to his Emperor; and when his once-admired model, George Frederick, the Ansbacher, tried to inveigle him into a new and active alliance of Protestant princes, the grey-beard Elector of Brandenburg was content to exhort them "to use all amicable means, and to commend the rest to Almighty God": a sentence which might have issued word for word from the pen of old Chancellor Distelmeyer, or from the crafty lips of John George himself. Remembrance of the difficulties which had attended his forcible seizure of the Electorate next moved Joachim Frederick to revise the conditions of succession in the House of Hohenzollern. He came to terms with his half-brothers, making over to them the Frankish lands, and secured renewed recognition for Achilles' domestic statute, providing that the Mark of Brandenburg should not be partitioned and should pass by primogeniture in the male line—a wise ordinance which none but the Great Elector among subsequent princes ever dared to evade.

Furthermore, Joachim Frederick, so speedily grown reasonable and tame, made the "*Geheimer Rat*," or Privy Council, the most powerful governing body in the realm. This Council was no invention of his own, but a well-tested device which at that time had been instituted in practically every European State, consisting of an administrative assembly of Privy Councillors, meeting under the presidency of a Lord High Chamberlain or Marshal and, in the words of Frederick the Great, bound to sanction the deeds or misdeeds of the ruler. Joachim Frederick, it is true, laid no very heavy burden of responsibility upon his Privy Council, nor had he previously imposed one upon his Estates of the Realm. The "*Old Nightcap*," as he was called by his son John Sigismund, who was easily provoked and would flare up as his father had once done with John George, could no longer be induced to undertake any big projects. It must be remembered, however, that this Elector



ELECTOR JOACHIM FREDERICK

was one of the few Hohenzollerns who allowed their sons—that is, their eldest sons—a considerable share in the government. But if the young heir-apparent was (according to a letter of the Imperial Ambassador) the “gad-fly which endeavoured by repeated stinging to induce the nag Brandenburg to push on,” the old Elector, for his part, did his best by continually reining in the mare of State and applying the brakes to maintain the *status quo*. None the less, the young man did succeed eventually in getting his father into closer touch with his brethren in the evangelical faith throughout Europe, and did induce him to enter into a covenant with the Palatinate, that bulwark of the Reformed faith, and to form an alliance with the Dutch Republic. Both steps, which were intended to secure the succession in the important matter of Jülich and Cleves, elicited frigid disapproval in Vienna, and helped to involve the peace-loving Elector in new troubles. As a last refuge he clung despairingly to his old friends. Above all to Chancellor Löben, whose axiom was “Do let it alone!” Although the heir-apparent struggled with might and main to tear this man from his father’s side, the old Elector (like William I at a later day with his Bismarck) stubbornly resisted every attempt to deprive him of his dear Löben.

Shortly before his sudden and unforeseen decease, Joachim Frederick set out on a little holiday journey to recuperate somewhat after the worries of ten years of government. To be sure, as *dux Prussiae*, he had purchased from Poland, for good gold coin, the guardianship of the weak-minded Duke of Prussia, but his reception in Königsberg, which at that time still acted and thought of itself as a completely free State, had been in the highest degree unfriendly, and had given him little taste for revisiting a country from which his distant descendant was one day to take the proud title “King in Prussia.” At first the Elector thought of driving out to Joachimstal, near Grimnitz in the Uckermark, where he had built a school for

a hundred and twenty boys, which was subsequently transferred by the Great Elector to Berlin. But later the prematurely aged and chronically irritable gentleman decided to inspect the works on the Finow Canal which had been begun under his personal instructions, remarking to his travelling companion, the Lord High Chamberlain, Count von Schlick, that "there is more pleasure to be had out of waters than men." The Elector thought, however, that it would be a good plan to go first to have a look at the new locks that were being constructed on the Upper Spree. From his birth, which had cost his mother her life, he had been a weakly little creature of insignificant stature. It was said that as an infant the life was only kept in him by the administration of Malmsey wine. On the return journey from this his last tour of inspection he died in his travelling carriage. It was at Köpenick, just outside Berlin. "Now we are nearing Berlin, the place the prince my son, the 'Planmaker,' is so fond of, the only place where he will ever stay for any length of time, the hothead!" he remarked to his companion Schlick, and added ponderously: "What I always say to him is, 'Don't blow upon what does not burn you!'" There and then an apoplexy struck him down at the side of his lifelong bosom friend. With a great effort the horrified Schlick raised the fallen man, and set him in an upright position. But it was no use; the Elector was dead, and dangled beside him in the carriage like a broken puppet.

And although Schlick, with passionate gestures, kept on entreating them to desist, the folk of Köpenick, seeing the carriage rumble past, continued to shout enthusiastically, "*Vivat* Joachim Friedrich! Long live our Elector!"

JOHN SIGISMUND

(1572-1619)

THE Prussian history books are full of the legend that John Sigismund's profession of the Reformed, that is to say of the Calvinistic, faith, was an event of great importance in the development of Brandenburg-Prussia. They say that it bought the country and all its reigning House into touch with those progressive States of Western Europe which supported the Reformation, such as Holland, England, and Huguenot France; while the Electorate of Saxony, stuck in the backwater of an old-fashioned Lutheranism, missed the tide of the great movement that transformed our world.

This interpretation, however, though flattering to the Reformed House of Hohenzollern, will not quite hold water. The only part that Brandenburg-Prussia was immediately called upon to play in the game of international politics into which it had thereby been drawn was that of making itself useful to the lands of Jülich and Cleves, which the marriage of the Electoral Crown Prince (now the Elector John Sigismund) with the Prussian Princess Anna, daughter of the heiress of those States on the lower Rhine, was to bring to Brandenburg. Actually at the time of the young people's wedding the bridegroom's grandfather, old John George, boding ill, had lifted up his voice like Laocoon against this trend towards the perilous West; and, indeed, it was subsequent quarrels about these possessions, and not the new ecclesiastical vestments they had assumed, which brought the Hohenzollerns to the Rhine and so into contact with the Western Powers. On the other hand, that friendship with the reigning House of the Palatinate, which the easy-going Joachim Frederick had continued to cultivate, came very near to a breach now that Hohenzollerns

and Palatines shared a creed. This again was due to disputes about the Jülich-Cleves succession, to which the Palatines also laid claim, and the quarrel continued till the Treaty of Xanten gave Cleves, Mark, and Ravensburg provisionally to the Brandenburg Crown, and Jülich-Berg to the principedom of Palatinate-Neuberg. In home affairs, moreover, in their relations with their subjects, the Hohenzollerns' pointless secession to the Reformed Church was anything but advantageous to them as rulers of the Mark. They became thereby, quite unnecessarily, spiritually estranged from the greater part of their subjects, who, having just become Lutheran, were disposed to remain so. For centuries this unprofitable surrender of the Lutheran in favour of the Reformed Creed cut off the Hohenzollerns from a sympathetic understanding with the clergy and laity of their country. It is far from clear why John Sigismund, accompanied by a younger brother and certain councillors, solemnly adopted the Creed of the Reformed Church for himself and his heirs in Berlin Cathedral on Christmas morning, 1613. It may have been the effect of a genuine personal reaction against the all-too-strict dogmatic instruction which had been his portion under his grandfather's regime at the hands of a hard and narrow-hearted Lutheran Court preacher. He himself maintained that he did it to satisfy his conscience. This declaration, however, accords ill enough with all else that we know of his character. He was a hardened voluptuary and free-liver—the only habitual drunkard, moreover, there has ever been in the Hohenzollern family, who in this matter have been moderate to a man, for Frederick William IV's occasional indulgence in champagne, which, oddly enough, revolutionary poets and wild spirits of the '48 of all people have thrown in his face, cannot justly be imputed to that Royal romantic for intemperance. John Sigismund, plump even as a youth, early developed such rolls of fat about his body that he could scarcely walk. In addition he became work-



ELECTOR JOHN SIGISMUND

shy, sluggish, and undecided to a degree. It certainly cannot have been regard for his more vigorous and resolute consort that induced his change of faith, for she had been educated in strict Lutheranism among the secularized orders of far Prussia, and she remained rooted in these convictions and true to the old evangelical persuasion. Moreover, in other matters this Elector betrayed no very acute sensibilities. He, too, was travelling when his father died upon the road. Even for an event touching him so nearly he would not break off his journey into East Prussia, but appointed meanwhile a docile Governor in Berlin. This does not argue any very warm attachment between father and son. His relations with his wife, though they are said to have been very ardent at first, grew worse year by year—their six children notwithstanding. John Sigismund used to threaten her sometimes in his cups, whereupon she, being the hardy and dominant woman she was, would defend herself by hurling plates and glasses about his tipsy head. With others besides, the Elector, after the manner of drunkards, was frequently quarrelsome when in liquor, and on one occasion in Königsberg he actually exchanged a few furious blows with his future son-in-law.

All this does not suggest a sensitive and pious disposition! And yet there must have been some strand of piety in him which did actually make him wish to receive the Sacrament according to the forms of the Reformed Church, and in conformance with that Swiss doctrine so hated by the Lutherans; for he certainly fell out with a number of people over this whim. In the first place with his wife, though it must be admitted that by that time he probably cared little for her favour; but secondly, and which is more to the point, with his Estates of the Realm, to whose good opinion he could by no means be indifferent; and eventually with almost the whole country. There was actual street rioting in Berlin and elsewhere on account of this inexplicable act of the Elector, which at a blow

sundered him, and later his whole house, for centuries long from the beliefs of the greater part of his subjects.

Yet this ruler, so personally weak in other matters, stood like a rock on this one point, and, having chosen his creed, kept it to the end. In his forty-fourth year his immoderate drinking brought on an apoplexy which almost completely crippled, both mentally and physically, his already puffy, grossly obese, and inert body. For another three years, indeed, he managed to keep "on his legs," as the saying goes, which in his case meant usually seated in a chair. But his speech had been affected, so that he was compelled, whether he liked it or not, to surrender the government to his domineering consort, and she exercised her tongue upon his Ministers, and ruled the sickly Crown Prince with a rod of iron. That young man, established as governor in the ancient Schwanenburg at Cleves, the newly acquired duchy that, isolated from the Mark, lay in the far West like a Brandenburgish islet, sat there vainly endeavouring with a handful of troops to achieve plenary power. The crippled Elector himself would have liked to make one more attempt to enforce his title in Prussia, his most easterly possession, held by him as a feudal vassal from Poland, but felt he no longer had energy enough for that difficult task. In modern times the East Prussians like to pose as Prussians of the Prussians, and loyal of the loyal, but in those days they were violently opposed to what they considered the threat of Brandenburgish tyranny. The East Prussian "junkers" more especially, who ruffled it in an *entente cordiale* with the Polish nobility, would not hear of the new Prussian regime, and petitioned the King of Poland to adopt their country as a province of his. The city of Königsberg, moreover, where the Lutheran clergy led the hue and cry against a Calvinistic Elector, showed very plainly its disinclination to swear troth and fealty to the House of Hohenzollern. It was not till John Sigismund had solemnly done homage upon his knees to the Polish

monarch, had paid heavy tribute, and had conceded to the Poles a right of veto in matters of government, that he was able to take possession of his Eastern colony. Even so there was perpetual trouble there, and in face of his approaching end John Sigismund, quicksilver in his youth, but leaden in his age, felt increasingly that he had extended the borders of Brandenburg and the rule of his house too far, both East and West.

During the last few months of his declining life, having formally handed over the reins of government to his son George William, he spent his happiest hours in the house of his Groom of the Chambers, Anthony Freitag, in the Poststrasse at Berlin, and it was there that he died. He was a decent, loyal soul, that Groom of the Chambers, and he stuck to his master even when he had become little more than a helpless, bloated mass of flesh. Although he went over to the Reformed Church, the Elector never attempted to constrain another soul to change of creed; he had too much intrinsic piety for that. On the contrary, he had promulgated a splendid Edict of Toleration, in which he challenged the adherents of both confessions, the Lutheran and the Calvinist, to respect and bear with each other, thereby showing that at bottom he was an honest fellow and remarkably sincere. In vain he addressed a particular appeal, as did later his descendant, the Great Elector, to the Lutheran clergy of his country, earnestly requesting them to put an end to their iniquitous slanders from the pulpit against the bold Zwingli and the honourable Calvin. The parsons continued their calumnious twaddle in Brandenburg, and never failed to find a shield and a rabid defender in the embittered Electress.

When Freitag, the Groom of the Chambers, saw that his poor wreck of a master was very near his end, he feared that he would not be able to fetch the Reformed clergy in time, as they lived some distance away in the neighbourhood of the Castle, and in his flurry he proposed to

call in the nearer Lutheran pastor. The Elector, however, who was fully conscious in his death hour, perceived his servant's intention, and, anxiously raising both hands, covered his ears with them. And so he died, a truly pious man, determined to hear no more of all these terrestrial wranglings about the different forms of the Sacrament, the permissibility of Mass vestments, the definition of original sin, the efficacy of good works, and the procedure of the Last Judgment—of all this clerical hocus-pocus, so trivial in the face of death, about which the rival preachers of the Gospel in his country were to wag their tongues and dispute with acrimony for another two centuries and more.

GEORGE WILLIAM

(1595-1640)

GEORGE WILLIAM, awkward and sickly, last but one of Brandenburg's Electors, has traditionally hung as whipping-boy and scapegoat among the other rulers of his line in the family portrait gallery. From the time of Frederick the Great down to that of Wildenbruch, the Hohenzollern bard of the Hohenzollerns, who invariably metes out harder measure to him than to any other of his ancestors, people have gone out of their way to pour contempt on this man whose destiny it was to rule in Germany's darkest hour—in the very heart of a Germany torn in pieces, mortally stricken and wounded. It has been the custom to compare George William, the nervous invalid, with his sturdy son, the Great Elector, who never knew ill-health, and to emphasize the humiliating contrast.

Truth to tell, this Prince did his job far from badly, and succeeded in looking after himself, his little country, and his foreign possessions as well as could be expected in an age of political revolution and internecine war. George William was already a sick man when he assumed the Electoral Crown that his half-paralysed and drink-sodden father was no longer capable of wearing. An injury to one leg that never properly healed caused lameness, and as he soon overstrained his other sound leg, in his later years—there were but forty-five of them in all—he was usually obliged to use a Sedan-chair. At important discussions and conferences, such as those with his brother-in-law, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, he had himself lifted out and, leaning back in his seat, took part gravely and attentively in the debates; while the wrinkles would deepen on his always knit brows, with such painful assiduity did he listen.

As Electoral Crown Prince he had expressed himself very emphatically against his sister's union with the Swedish King, fearing that it would lead to embroilments with the Poles, with whom Gustavus was already quarrelling over Livonia. John Sigismund, then already failing, had wagged his head in token of assent to the proposed marriage, having been told that Gustavus Adolphus (to whom, later, the Lutherans laid exclusive claim) was by no means antipathetic to the Reformed Church; and that, for John Sigismund, was the main thing. The Electress, however, the dictatorial Anna, had been brought up in Prussia and had a weakness for the Poles, so that she sided with her son George William against her daughter's betrothal to the enemy of Poland; and no John Sigismund, no elector, no king in the world could do anything in face of her hard-bitten determination. Nevertheless, when her fat, squat husband was dead and Gustavus Adolphus, all virile strength and grace, came to Berlin to wait upon her in person for the hand of her daughter, being a woman and a mother, she was captivated all in a moment with the prospect of such a son-in-law, assented at once for, and on behalf of, her enraptured child, and packed the girl off to Sweden without more ado. How deeply the Electoral Princess herself was enamoured of her Gustavus Adolphus was to appear later when, after his violent death, she, his widow, sank into melancholia out of grief for her fallen hero, and sank into an early grave in Wolgast.

George William, limping back to his Berlin castle from Prussia, where the Polish King had just enfeoffed him (not omitting the customary ceremonies so humiliating for an Elector of Brandenburg) as *dux Prussiae*, found this family imbroglio awaiting him. It may be imagined how little pleased was the new Elector to learn of this surprising incident. His first act was to summon to his Court Count Adam Schwarzenberg to give him the practical—and also, no doubt, moral—support of which he stood in need.



ELECTOR GEORGE WILLIAM (died 1640)

George William had learned the true worth of this remarkable man, a native of Jülich, during the time when he had acted as Regent down there on the Rhine. From the first the Count had declared in favour of the Brandenburgish claims to Jülich-Cleves-Berg, and that so resolutely that he had brought on himself the Imperial ban. This fact alone ought to have prevented Frederick the Great from abusing his great-great-grandfather's Minister as a traitor to his country. Yet it may be pleaded on Frederick's behalf that, contented as he was with a very brief and sketchy knowledge of the mere broad outlines of history, he probably knew nothing at all about it; nor, perhaps, did he know that this "traitor" spent years in the service of Frederick's idol, the Great Elector.

Schwarzenberg's statesmanship and his whole personality have been subjected to very severe criticism, but it may be confidently asserted that there is nowhere any evidence that this man of the world ever, either through malice or through negligence, used his power to the injury of his country or of his Prince. The one thing which those who have delved into the archives claim definitely to have discovered against him in Imperial documents is that he, a Catholic, forged plans in collusion with the Emperor and with the Emperor's confessor, a Jesuit named Lamormain (or Lämmermann), to win the Elector for Catholicism—a form of "high treason" which does not look very black to us nowadays; only an exceptional stickler for orthodoxy would grow heated on that point to-day.

Apart from this project, which he clearly did not pursue very seriously, Schwarzenberg advised his Prince throughout his reign upon all important matters candidly and sincerely in accordance with his own real convictions. The fact that he repeatedly preached alliance with the Empire to his master, George William, can only be held against him by either a one-sided Protestant thinker or an obstinately bigoted opponent of Austria and the Habsburgs, like

Frederick the Great. The Thirty Years War was then raging through Germany, and George William was involved in it from the first as husband of the sister of the "Winter King"—that unlucky Palatine who allowed himself first to be elected King of Bohemia by the Bohemian Estates of the Realm, and then to be thoroughly beaten by the Imperial armies, thereafter to wander in banishment exposed to contempt, a man without a throne—for the Palatinate, too, had been taken from him—a luckless guest, whom each crowned head passed on to his neighbour with all possible speed.

What better could George William do at the time than remain loyal to Vienna and the Emperor? He saw the Princes who had fallen out with Ferdinand, most Jesuitical of all the Habsburgs, going down right and left, one after the other, like nine-pins: first his brother-in-law of the Palatinate; next another relative, his uncle, his father's brother, John George of Jägerndorf, who, beaten like the Palatine Elector by the Emperor and placed under the Imperial ban, was forced to beg his bread in Transylvania while his pretty duchy was pocketed by Austria.

Ought George William to have come out boldly from the first on the side of the Swedish King, as writers of Protestant history books say that he should have done? Gustavus Adolphus, however, stood opposed to the Empire, and, as we now know, broke into Germany less in defence of the Protestant faith than in sheer lust of conquest. As for his Swedes, whose depredations had constantly to be met and suppressed even in the days of the Great Elector, they rioted and wasted in Brandenburg, their oft-boasted discipline notwithstanding, as though they had received a command from on high to emulate the Huns.

It is easy to talk of George William's slackness and inactivity. In the main he was true to the principle of involving himself as little as might be in the wars which raged round and through his country. The excuse he him-

self often offered, and rightly, was, "What do I care for 'the common cause' where loss of my honour and all my temporal prosperity is concerned?" Compared with the Swedish King's and Wallenstein's vast hosts, the Elector's tiny army was almost non-existent. Impoverished as he was, he could hardly have increased it, let alone equipped it with arms. Even his great military genius of a son had to borrow money from the wealthy King of France before he was able to do this. The Mark lay in the very vortex of the fighting, and was used constantly as a battle-ground, although the Elector applied several times to his Swedish brother-in-law asking him to do his fighting for the Gospel elsewhere—in South Germany, say, or in the Palatinate, where Protestantism was far more seriously threatened by Catholic neighbours than up here in his Lutheran Brandenburg. Moreover, he, George William, was an invalid, a lame man, who knew nothing of generalship, and, indeed, did not wish to know, although as head of the State he was naturally flattered when the Emperor Ferdinand conferred on him the title of "Imperial Generalissimo" in gratitude for his, at least ever recurrent, loyalty to the Habsburgs.

In spite of waverings, in spite of some tacking to and fro, the main trend of the Elector's statecraft followed the lead of the Austrophil Schwarzenberg, even though on one occasion, under Swedish pressure, he did send him back for a couple of years to his Rhenish lands, where at that time the Dutch and the Spaniards were constantly at loggerheads. George William's demeanour was between smiling and weeping each time that his Royal brother-in-law Gustavus Adolphus drove him out of Berlin in order to shake and frighten him out of his neutrality. On these occasions the Elector would withdraw before the wrathful Swede with all his family, either to Köpenick or to Trep-tow, or even as far as Spandau. Once, before Gustavus's victory at Breitenfeld, George William, a wary and prudent

rather than an irresolute statesman, permitted his brother-in-law's troops to advance to Berlin, and to train their artillery from the banks of the Spree upon the ancient castle of his ancestors before he declared himself ready for concessions. Often, too, he would get his womenfolk, the Royal ladies, his mother, his consort, or his mother-in-law (to whom, poor as he was, he gave shelter in her banishment), to work on the Swede in his favour, knowing well that Gustav's temperament was open to feminine influence. Or again, he would take refuge behind his sister, Gustavus Adolphus's consort, who had a way of coaxing her adored husband to be lenient towards her poor invalid brother. It is true that such deeds as these have no very "heroic" ring about them! George William, however, was in a far weaker and more dangerous position than his Royal brother-in-law. In the last resort, even had Wallenstein beaten him, Gustavus could always have retreated to his own country. But into what refuge could the poverty-stricken little Brandenburger have crept, once he had definitely left his precarious perch upon the fence in favour of any of the combatants who surged about him? His lot would have been to carry the begging-bowl from Court to Court, like the Palatine Elector.

No one, surely, will blame George William, the drunkard's offspring, because he lacked the health, the toughness and robustiousness, which he bequeathed to his own great son. Who, not being God, can cast it up against him that he, with his short neck, his big head that looked as if it had been crushed out of shape, his sad, morose countenance, cut a feeble, irresolute, miserable figure beside Sweden's blithe, courageous, and handsome monarch? As for the fact that, in spite of his good Schwarzenberg (who, by the way, never dreamed of setting himself up as Regent or usurping his master's place as certain over-clever pot-house politicians have pretended), in spite of that loyal adviser and of his own good sense, he committed some

follies and made some mistakes, what prince and what man has not? Even Frederick the Great, who deals out such hard measure to the scapegoat of his line, is obliged to admit at the close of his written indictment that the distracted times in which that Prince held sway must bear the chief blame for his unhappy reign. And this Royal admirer of the Great Elector can, after all, bring only one serious charge against his hero's father, which is that he did not raise a standing army to defend his country, that he was not, in fact, skilled in the art of war. But can this really be held blameworthy in a petty ruler, temperamentally mild and peaceable, who, finding himself without any fault of his own in a maelstrom of the most appalling wars, attempted to keep his throne for himself and his heirs by not taking a side, and, moreover, actually succeeded in so doing? George William's policy found its justification eight years after his death at the Peace of Westphalia, in which Brandenburg-Prussia, thanks to its persistently friendly attitude to the Emperor and the Empire during the Thirty Years War, came off by no means badly—better, at any rate, than at later peace treaties under George William's son, the Great Elector. The latter even admitted as much, despite his violent antipathy to his father.

Moreover, George William's economies, under which his son, Frederick William, groaned and grumbled as Crown Prince, had also their justification. Where was the poor, harried Elector, obliged to keep his Court for the most part in Peitz, Küstrin, or Königsberg, away from a Berlin perpetually threatened by some enemy or other, to raise money enough to enable his eldest son—he had three other children—to drive about in a State coach and play the great lord? He spent little enough on himself, although he naturally loved hunting and banqueting, and yet he often had to borrow from his Schwarzenberg, who was a much richer man than the Elector. "The Mark of Brandenburg," wrote George William to the Emperor Fer-

dinand, who had invited him to the Imperial Diet at Regensburg, "is so exhausted that it is impossible for me to meet my own ordinary expenses. Still less could I raise money sufficient for such a costly journey." When the Emperor heard from the Brandenburger that Gustavus Adolphus had extracted certain stipulations at the sword's point, he replied, drily enough, "Your Electoral Highness will find that the proceedings of the Swedes in Your Highness' lands will differ in no way from those of the troops under my Generals, Wallenstein, Pappenheim, Tilly, and others, of whose authorized foragings we at one time received such lively complaints." Unfortunately the Imperial prophet was only too right. The Mark of Brandenburg, burned by the Imperialists, ravaged by the Swedes, suffered more during the Thirty Years War than any other German province, and afterwards resembled a "waste laid waste," if the tautology may be used to suggest an almost utterly depopulated and barren desert of sand.

When news reached Berlin of George William's death from dropsy, after a long illness, in remote Königsberg's gloomy fortress, Schwarzenberg, established in Berlin at that time as Regent and provisionally to remain so, wept day and night for his dead Elector. And when his bigoted chaplain and confessor upbraided him for mourning like that over the God-appointed decease of his lord, a heretic into the bargain, that mighty but soft-hearted man wept anew and said: "Even if he was a Calvinistic heretic to the hour of his death, my late lamented Elector, the Catholic Church, will have to make an exception in his case and save him! Every day as long as I live I will have a Mass said for my poor dear lord's soul, and then I shall be sure to meet him again in Heaven!"

FREDERICK WILLIAM I, THE GREAT ELECTOR

(1620—1688)

WOLGAST on the Peene. Hard by the Usedom ferry. In the castle of the Dukes of Pomerania. *Anno* 1633. Upon a black-draped bier, amid shimmer of candle-light, lies the body of Gustavus Adolphus. Frederick William, the Electoral Crown Prince, the future "Great Elector," takes a last, long look at the dead King and speaks :

The time has come ! Farewell, most noble Uncle,
Ere thou forth farest to thy Fatherland.
Sweden's tall ship waits even now to bear
The noble relics of her nation's glory ;
Winds swell her sails, silent the steersman stands
Grasping the helm, yet still must fix his eyes
On the vacant deck, black-draped for its sole burden,
A warrior, a dead King, who journeys home
Beneath grey skies over a greyer ocean.
Rememberest thou, my father's sister's Consort,
How scarce two years, two fleeting years, have passed
Since first thou landed'st here, leading a mightier host
Than since great Caesar's day frightened the world,
All high of heart, and ardent as their Lord
Stoutly to fight and further the new Faith,—
To fight and fighting fall if such their fate?
Ah, with what joy I sprang to meet thee then,
My father's and my mother's messenger,
To bid thee welcome ! Frankfort was the place
On Oder's strand where first I saw thy face.
Thy two eyes, blue as steel, like swords did search
The soul behind my darker gaze ; thou gav'st
A word that since has kept me like a blessing,
"Lo here ! Here is a lad shall shake the world !"
Once more, great King, lift those sunk lids upon me,
Thou mighty Monarch, open thine eyes once more,
Let me again feel their blue light upon me—
Thou hearest not ! the pallid lips are silent.

(To the watchers)

Nay, yet a moment, cover not the body!
 Let me look once again upon that wound
 That brought him death in his victorious hour.
 Who fired the bullet? Was it friend or foe-man?
 Some traitor, or the blind destructive fire
 Of Wallenstein's fell troopers? Tell his name,
 Thou cruel rent in the tanned leather collar,
 Blackened with powder smoke, evilly scorched!
 Who made thee? Come, his name I'll conjure from thee!
 I swear the King's death I'll revenge upon him,
 And Nuremberg's thousand tortures wait to deal
 A thousand deaths to him who slew the best!
 Thou hast no tongue! And he, why he forgives
 In death, even as Christ upon the Cross forgave
 All foes! Farewell, Defender of the Faith,
 The time is come! Silent before thy silence
 Let me now stand. For every sound affronts
 The sanctity about him. Protestant,
 Thou diedst, for the true faith that Luther taught,
 With blood hast sealed thy witness to the Gospel.
 Germania weeps for thee, her faithful lover,
 Who for her freedom didst forsake thy life.
 Bear him aloft, the Champion of the Spirit,
 The dead clay carry to your Swedish shores!
 The dead clay! Greet thy daughter, mighty Monarch,
 Tell her this heart's dear hope, one day to hold
 Her in these arms, and with her thee, my father!
 Thou leav'st us, Sire—and yet 'tis but thy dust,
 The cold white ashes of a burned-out fire
 That for a season lit and warmed our world.
 So the great King is gathered to his fathers.
 But here, secure in immortality,
 Sweden's greatest, wed to Germany in Spirit,
 Remains for aye! If yet the power of Rome
 Have not enslaved us, praise is due to thee,
 Our second Luther, sent from northern seas,
 As God raised Armin from Germania's womb
 To be our shield. Take thou my tears, O King,
 The last best tribute that this land can give—
 Now bear him towards his immortality!

So far the poet in the long soliloquy he intended his hero,
 Frederick William, to speak beside the body of Gustavus

Adolphus ere its conveyance back to Sweden. His drama was to be entitled *The Great Elector*. He ceased to write, and plunged again into his "historical sources," all those records, acts, and tomes which illuminate the Great Elector's life, from Pufendorf's dry and learned *De rebus gestis Frederici Wilhelmi Magni* down to Herr Bernhard Erdmannsdörffer's industrious accumulation of documents. And, not for the first time since he began his poetic-historic work, the dust of historic research seemed to rise in clouds, smothering the poet's fire. Once more he found himself assailed by doubts, doubts in the first place as to Gustavus Adolphus's disinterested endeavours and idealism; for a number of historians appeared to think he was actuated less by zeal for the Evangelical religion than by ambition to found a great Swedish empire about the Baltic when he made his incursions into Germany. One fact alone, the Swedish King's negotiations with the French Cardinal Richelieu, the arch-opponent of Protestantism, the exterminator of the Huguenots, almost forced one to take this view. Nay, eventually the unhappy poet, feeling helpless amidst the heaving billows of the ocean of historical research, even began to doubt the sublimity of the hero of his drama, the Great Elector himself!

It is true that by contrast with the feeble personality and timid statesmanship of his father, George William, this Frederick William, first of several Hohenzollerns of the name, cut a strong, masterful figure. His mother was a lively Palatine princess, sister of the "Winter King," and her son was no doubt hewn from harder wood than the sickly offspring of drunken John Sigismund. Moreover, he early gave evidence of a craft and subtlety far in advance of that of his more inoffensive and limited sire, who was well enough content to trust in God and the almighty Schwarzenberg. Frederick William was very well brought up, another point in favour of poor George William, who in this matter affords a more edifying example than the

majority of Hohenzollern fathers. A nobleman from the Lower Rhine, one John Frederick von Calcum, surnamed von Leuchtmar, became the able director and counsellor of the young Prince's youth. The Electoral Crown Prince was a solemn child, showed a melancholic disposition at a very early age, developed slowly mentally, and learned his lessons with difficulty. Four years in the Netherlands, which he visited in his tutor's company, were of decisive importance in the formation of his character. There he struck up a friendship with Prince Frederick Henry, youngest son of William the Silent, and, indeed, he got on excellently with all the politic, monosyllabic members of the House of Orange. It was in the tents of this Prince, then at grips with the Spaniards, that the young Brandenburg picked up his first notions of that military science in which he was later to distinguish himself so greatly. In contrast to his delicate father and his soft son he took an uncommon delight in soldiering from the first, and like his twenty-year-old contemporary, Cromwell, he preferred to have his portraits painted in harness.

More important even than his military education, of which, of course, he only acquired the rudiments under the influence of Prince Frederick Henry, his future brother-in-law, were other lessons learned in Holland. The Netherlandish States-General at that time were justly regarded in Europe as a school of statesmanship and of statesmen. A generation later Peter the Great went to Holland to learn not only about shipbuilding, but, in addition, the art of building a State. Though Frederick William I was only eighteen when his father, whose always poor health was then growing worse, recalled him from the Netherlands, it was doubtless there, and not least from the Prince of Orange, that he learned the reserve and cunning which were shortly to distinguish him. Like almost all the Hohenzollerns he was on very bad terms with his father, more especially as the latter kept him so short of funds that,

when in Holland, he had absolutely to beg him for a red velvet upholstered coach such as every gentleman of standing used in that country! As Electoral Crown Prince he was at daggers drawn with his father's confidant, Schwarzenberg. Melancholic as he was, one night when he fell ill with measles he even conceived, and clung obstinately to, the idea that the Minister had given him a poisoned tart at a banquet held in his palace. The Prince passed the two years preceding his father's death far from his birthplace, Berlin, in the wilds of East Prussia, or in gloomy Küstrin, where his boyhood, till his journey to Holland, had been spent in something very like imprisonment. His father's close-fistedness made those two years almost intolerable even to the sedate and frugal Frederick William, and all the more so by contrast with the full and pleasant existence he had recently tasted in the cheerful Netherlands.

George William of the feeble loins, however, did at least oblige him by dying early, and at twenty years of age Frederick William reigned in his stead. Additional reproaches have been heaped on poor George William's weary head for having kept his son entirely out of public affairs, though these charges fall somewhat flat when we take account of the Prince's extreme youth. However that may be, the young ruler at once showed his statesmanship and even a measure of concurrence in his father's policy by provisionally retaining in office his father's prepotent, lifelong counsellor Schwarzenberg. It is true that the young Elector, a double-dealer from the first, also lent an ear to the great man's opponents, and acted against his advice in attempting to come to terms with the Swedes and in contemplating the partial disbandment of his army. Schwarzenberg could not warn him gravely enough against both these steps, and more than five-and-twenty years later Frederick William, in his political testament, was compelled to confess that

Schwarzenberg's policy at that time had been absolutely right.

In the meantime the sexagenarian Count from the Lower Rhine (a man who has been most unjustly slandered) took so much to heart the initial political errors of the young Elector, and the many secret intrigues of his enemies and of the malcontent Brandenburgish Generals, that he developed a persecution mania and, fortunately for himself, speedily died of a stroke. It would not have been difficult for Schwarzenberg, who had all the power in his hands, and was, in addition, George William's chief creditor, to become a kind of Markish Wallenstein, and, from his vantage-point in Berlin, hurl defiance at the new Elector in Königsberg. But Schwarzenberg, in his inmost heart, was, like Bismarck, a born servant.

It certainly cannot be maintained that the Great Elector's first essays in statecraft were very wise or very successful. On the contrary, they were just as tentative and undistinguished as were, later, his great-grandson Frederick the Great's first military ventures. Like all his Electoral predecessors he had to do homage at Warsaw to the Polish King, now Ladislaus IV, to receive at his hands the feudal tenure of Prussia—a humiliating formality which Frederick, in his silent way, long cherished as a grudge against the Poles. Moreover, as years went by, his initial enthusiasm for Sweden wore thinner and thinner. The fact that Gustavus Adolphus's only child and daughter, his cousin Christine, to whom he early paid court, rejected his suit, and that more than once, may have had something to do with this. Queen Christine, the Swedish Pallas Athene, who later embraced Catholicism, seems to have been a most masculine person, and not, as she herself felt, very well adapted to matrimony. "Why should one who is, and can remain, sufficient unto himself, become the property of another?" she is reported to have said, quoting a poet of antiquity, when she finally sent her cousin Brandenburg's

envoys about their business after keeping him dangling at her heels for some years. Whereupon the twenty-six-year-old Elector, furious with this Swedish deceiver, turned to his beloved Holland, and applied for the hand of Louise Henrietta, eldest daughter of the Prince of Orange whom he so greatly admired, and a good, pious girl, if not physically very robust. She was a great-granddaughter of Admiral Coligny, and she, too, made difficulties at first, though she eventually allowed herself to be persuaded in view of her future husband's Protestant allegiance.

Among the men he had about him from that time to his thirtieth year he was chiefly influenced by one Conrad von Burgsdorff, a tipsy swashbuckler, but an astute fellow for all that, who knew how to get on the right side of both the Junkers and the Estates of Prussia. He captured the Elector with his frank, soldierly ways, to which, after the manner of colonels of the Thirty Years War, he gave free, not to say noisy and unmannerly, rein. The friendship between the Elector and this Lord High Chamberlain von Burgsdorff even went the length of "*Waffenbruderschaft*" (brotherhood in arms), in accordance with which each bequeathed the other sword and pistols in case of sudden death.

Meanwhile Frederick William had long given up the idea of disbanding his troops. On the contrary, his mind was now busy with the project of creating a standing army, a *miles perpetuus* as it was called in those days, and that in the teeth of the unfaltering opposition of his Estates of the Realm. His whole policy came to turn on the sole project of squeezing by fair means or foul the largest possible contributions for this army from his unwilling subjects. With this object the Excise was devised, and the last obtainable penny of taxation was wrung from towns and Estates. He broke the resistance to these perpetual war levies offered by the nobility (particularly in East Prussia, where they had the support of their Polish neighbours) by making an example of one of their ringleaders, a certain Colonel

von Kalckstein, whom he seized by treachery, put to the rack in defiance of the privileges of a Prussian nobleman, and finally executed—all most unpalatable proceedings. By this and similar acts of frightfulness the masterful Elector achieved his purpose, and made his army a permanent department of the State in Brandenburg-Prussia.

None the less, Frederick's William's earliest military exploits were no less unfortunate than his first essays in statecraft. The campaign upon which he embarked single-handed when the Thirty Years War had drawn to its tardy conclusion, to effect further conquests in Jülich and Berg in pursuance of the old quarrel about the succession, was a dismal failure. He had to request the Emperor's intervention, and a treaty was negotiated that left all as it had been under the former Treaty of Xanten. The sole result of this costly venture was to give the Elector a bad name as a disturber of the peace of Europe, a reputation which his grandson, Frederick the Great, fixed, with an added blackness, upon the House of Hohenzollern. The Elector prospered a little better in a subsequent campaign in the North. He was drawn into it by the ambitious King Charles X of Sweden, a more fortunate applicant than Frederick William for the favours of Gustavus Adolphus's daughter. In company with the Swedes he conquered Warsaw, his sole object in the war being to shake off his feudal obligations to Poland; he had no qualms at all about breaking the oath he had sworn on his knees to the Polish King. At the same time he prudently took precautions not to put his head under the Swedish yoke. Having brusquely dismissed Burgsdorff, who, though hearty and loquacious, had eventually proved somewhat high-handed, he now had at his side a very shrewd councillor, one Count von Waldeck, a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, who had found his own domains too small for the full exercise of his great political talents. This astute and far-sighted man was destined to have a great career in the

Netherlands, and no doubt the Elector's outlook was greatly enlarged by contact with a political thinker who took all Europe for his province. Waldeck, however, soon had enough of the crafty and unreliable Lord of Brandenburg, and the latter, too, preferred, like a fox, to go his way alone.

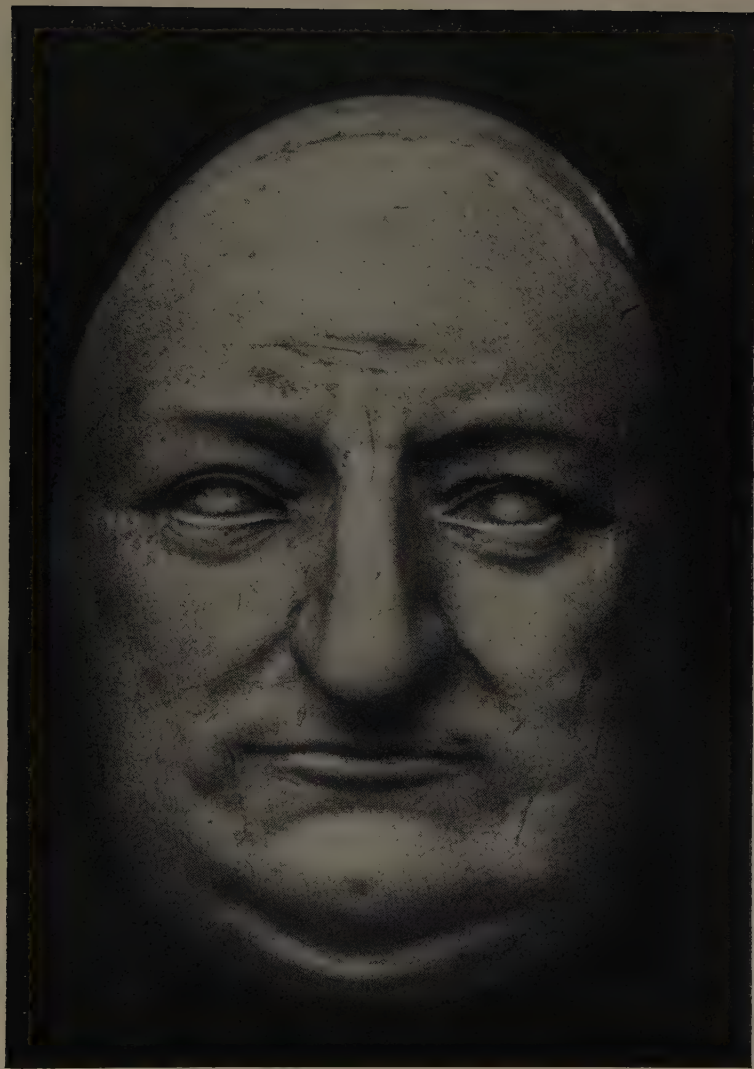
After Waldeck's departure the Elector, on his own initiative and against the majority of his Ministers, even then beginning to be dazzled by the radiance of Louis XIV, pursued a policy hostile to France, and concluded a Treaty with the States-General, at that time fighting for their very existence against the French King. This was "pure generosity" on his part, or so the Dutch thought! And yet there can be little doubt that Frederick hoped for a catch of some kind when he went fishing in the troubled waters of so great a conflict. Moreover, he was ambitious and lusted after the laurels of Gustavus Adolphus, his boyhood's hero. Much to his chagrin, both his ambition and his impetuosity were speedily curbed by Austria, which also entered into an alliance with the Netherlands. The sixty-year-old Field-Marshal Montecuculi, whose troops advanced to the Austrian slogan, dating from that time, of "*Immer langsam voran!*" ("Go slow!") had express orders from Vienna not to give battle on a larger scale, but rather, as the Prime Minister, the ironical Lobkowitz, hoped, "to run in double harness with Brandenburg like a well-behaved quiet horse beside an unbroken colt, and so prevent his committing himself *à corps perdu* to one faction."

To the fiery Elector, who was thirsting to beat the great Turenne, these well-meant tactics were unbearably irritating. Through one of his Privy Councillors he signed a premature peace treaty with the *Roi Soleil*, a treaty which was as ill received in the country as was later his great-great-grandson Frederick William II's Treaty of Basle. Finding that the murmurs of the Teutons got on his nerves, and being used to tear up treaties in a trice, the Elector broke with France within the year and again made terms

with Austria. A second, scarcely less glorious, campaign opened in Alsace, where the Elector, now fifty-five years old, came into touch with a spirit as fiery as his own, that of his nephew of Orange, the future William III of England. A great joint plan of campaign against the *Roi Soleil* was the fruit of the meeting.

Louis, however, the prince of diplomats, sprang a mine upon the perfidious Brandenburger. He incited the Swedes, a huge force of them thirty thousand strong, partly composed of German mercenaries of the lowest type, to fall upon the poor defenceless Mark, which suffered even worse things in this raid than in the Thirty Years War. Now followed the Elector's greatest triumph, the victory of Fehrbellin, sung so often by the bards of Brandenburg. Some eight thousand Brandenburgish soldiers completely routed about ten thousand Swedes—we smile sadly to-day at such tiny figures! The heroes who fought beside the Elector in that battle have all something of the legendary fame of the heroes of the *Iliad*, from Colonel Hennings von Treffenfeld, whom Frederick ennobled on his own authority on the battlefield, to Prince von Homburg, sung by Kleist, old Derfflinger, riding bold as a youngster at the head of his troop of horse, and the equerry Froben, who before the battle begged the favour of riding the Elector's own white horse, and on that conspicuous mount was shattered by the cannon-ball aimed at his lord. Louis XIV himself, when he saw maps and plans of the field, was amazed at the victory that first brought the Elector the surname of "the Great." The folk-ballad in which that title was bestowed originated in Alsace, still German in those days, and was printed in Strassburg. It would have been a far better thing for him and for us¹ had the Great Elector died after this supreme military success, the strategy of which has been analysed by his great-grandson, Frederick the Great, in his history of his House; either after this

¹ Prussians.



ELECTOR FREDERICK WILLIAM, "THE GREAT ELECTOR"

Life-mask

victory or after the subsequent conquest of Pomerania and the taking of Stettin; or, at latest, upon his second bold "hunting of the Swedes," when, despite gout and asthma, he set out to meet another Swedish incursion, instigated as a "diversion" by the French. With his wife, whom he always took with him on his campaigns, at his side, Frederick William traversed the snow- and ice-bound country in bitter January weather, and drove the invaders out of the farthest point of Prussia, across the frozen Kurische Haff (a Baltic lagoon) that rang out beneath their hurrying feet like bugle-calls. The great Elector would have made a finer and more glorious end then, amidst his people's shouts of victory, than thirteen years later, when he left this world under the dubious verdict of history.

It would be a bold man, indeed, who could enter what followed Fehrbellin to the credit side of the Elector Frederick William's account. The Lord of Brandenburg, returned from following after the Swedes, found news awaiting him in Berlin of the Peace of Nimeguen—Nimwegen is its German form, and they called it "*Nimm weg*" ("Take away")—a peace which gave to the Dutch their own country, to the French Freiburg, and to the Swedes, whom the Elector had just driven out, all their original Pomeranian conquests, even to Stettin and Stralsund! Thus the Battle of Fehrbellin takes its place amongst those countless human contests which have been fought out to no purpose whatever. Nothing was left for the poor disillusioned Elector but to confirm the Peace of Nimeguen by signing the Peace of St-Germain-en-Laye.

This he did in July 1679. Thereafter, a hopelessly embittered Prince, he remained till shortly before his death implacably hostile to the Empire, and therewith to Germany. Though it may sound harsh to ears loyal to the Hohenzollerns, the hard, irrefragable historic fact must be set down that it was nothing but the passive concurrence of the Great Elector that enabled Louis XIV to take and

hold Strassburg and the greater part of Alsace-Lorraine—the very piece of Europe over which Frenchmen and Germans were to fight like wild beasts in 1870-71, and again in 1914-18. Louis XIV's "*Chambres de Réunion*," set up by the *Roi Soleil* to effect the reincorporation of any territory lost to the motherland of France either by treaty or rights of succession, were most able and efficient bodies, and knew that they and their paramount influence ran no peril from Brandenburg. Practically every high civil or military official in the Electorate had been bought with French money, with the single exception of good honest Derfflinger, who, being of sound Austrian peasant stock, was not for sale. To the sturdy horse-sense of an honest old trooper such as he the whole Court of Berlin at that time seemed a veritable old-clothes stall in the Prater, with everything up for sale, and everything priced. Gentle, pious Electress Louise Henrietta had a successor in the splendour-loving, forceful Dorothea, with an appetite for power and a head for business, and she, too, was willing enough to pocket the numerous presents and jewels that Louis's envoys in Berlin slipped unostentatiously into her palm. The Great Elector himself got a hundred thousand livres annually by the Treaty of St-Germain-en-Laye, in return for which he bound himself by a secret clause to give his vote at the Imperial election against the German House of Habsburg and in favour of Louis, his son, or any other candidate approved by the *Roi Soleil*. In addition, by the St-Germain pact, the Elector guaranteed free passage through his lands to French troops and, in case of necessity, refuge in his fortresses—that is to say, he made formal concessions on a scale to which even his poor, feeble, much-abused father would never have set his name. A few years later the Great Elector's "*apanage*" (the annual bribe, cloaked in the refinement of the French tongue) was increased by one-third, in return for which Frederick William—read and mark well!—actually promised Louis XIV his support, should

the latter be attacked, *without inquiry as to whether France were in the right or not!*

All this he did for the bitterest opponent of Germany who ever sat on the throne of the Bourbons. No! With the best will in the world one cannot maintain that the Great Elector's policy, at a critical time when the political foundations of Germany and France were being laid down, was *German*, or even *friendly* to Germany. Immediately after the theft of Strassburg he presented the French Ambassador in Berlin—and therewith his haughty sovereign—with a diamond-studded sword, and the twenty years' truce of Regensburg, by which the French land-robber was expressly and solemnly confirmed in his "annexations"—in plain German "*Mausereien*" (pilferings)—was again the work of the Elector, whose annual allowance was thereupon increased by the French to the sum of five hundred thousand louis.

An attempt has been made to find a human explanation and excuse for Frederick William's anti-German attitude in his profound disappointment over the Peace of Nimeguen, which had deprived him of all the fruits of his victory at Fehrbellin. But is this reason enough why a man of exceptional ability, one who allowed himself to be called "the Great," should have stood by while his country, his people, whose tongue he spoke and wrote, was thus betrayed and dismembered? The truth is that this particular Hohenzollern cared remarkably little what became of Germany, even though he once caused Schwerin, his Privy Councillor and his sons' tutor, to promulgate a pamphlet in support of German patriotic sentiments beginning: "Whosoever loves his Fatherland, whosoever has yet one drop of warm German blood in his veins, cannot but weep and wail for Germany! We have pledged our possessions, we have pledged our blood, our honour, our reputation, and all our reward has been to be made the slaves of foreign peoples, almost to have lost our ancient proud name, so that nations of whom we had scarcely

heard aforetime might be magnified! What now are the Rhine, the Weser, the Elbe, the Oder, but the captives of foreign Powers?"

These, however, were no more than the words of a political whipper-in, endeavouring to stir up public sentiment in Germany against the Swedes; and their conclusion runs: "*Summa*. All has been lost with glorious Pomerania and other such noble domains!" The Great Elector himself was the last to take personally to heart the fine challenge of that broad-sheet, the timely admonition "Remember that thou art a German!" In face of the incalculable injury done to the Realm by his support of Louis and of France, it seems little use to establish the fact that he did it unwillingly, and was never quite happy about his pact with the *Roi Soleil*. No doubt the Elector had a bad conscience, as time and again he entered into new agreements with that devourer of Germany, the most formidable before Napoleon, Clemenceau, and Poincaré. Otherwise he would not have kept so very quiet about his negotiations for a closer alliance with France, designed to form the basis of "a relationship of sincere friendship and complete understanding" between the rulers of the two countries, nor would he have surrounded the issue with such absolute secrecy. The Elector never proved himself a lover of Germany, still less that summit, that fine flower, of German racial pride, which uninstructed people, even to-day, sometimes take him to have been. This verdict is not much affected by the fact that towards the end of his life Frederick William began to wake up to the *Roi Soleil's* little dodges, to perceive that the ally who was more than a match for him in both strength and cunning had betrayed him—that is to say outmanœuvred him—time and again in the course of his reign; and that he then reverted to the other side, and gave his support to Habsburg and the German Empire once more. He had come to realize that to Louis XIV he was merely an insignificant pawn in the game. Louis smiled

behind his delicate, scented hand at his "dearest friend," the petty Elector, who would persist in believing that he might, under Louis's auspices, recover from the Swedes Pomerania, which he had vainly won from them on the field. Not for a moment did the *Roi Soleil* propose to strengthen the House of Brandenburg in this fashion, and, all in good time, he gave his "best friend" to understand as much in unmistakable terms. Till then Frederick William had scowlingly turned his broad back on the Empire and all its problems and aspirations, falsely arguing within himself, "You left me in the lurch—now you may go to perdition for all I care!" He gave no real help, even, towards raising the siege of Vienna when it was beleaguered by the Turks. His mere handful of troops arrived too late, and the glory of rescuing the capital of the German Empire from the Infidel fell to John Sobieski, King of Poland, who thereby brilliantly refuted the legend of Poland's eternal hatred of Germany. Gradually, however, the last of the Elector's many changes of policy began to find expression. The best deed of his life, worth far more than all the fruitless sabre-rattling of Fehrbellin, was the issue of the Edict of Potsdam on November 8, 1685. By this Edict the Great Elector solemnly invited all French Protestants leaving their homes for their faith's sake after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to seek refuge within his borders. With a stroke of the pen he thus acquired some thirteen thousand French refugees of quality as the shrewdest, most industrious, and ablest of his subjects, and these numbers increased under his son. The ageing Bourbon, whose mind clouded more and more during his latter years through fear of death and of the Judgment which his Court preachers loved to paint in the most horrible colours, was no little enraged by the trick his Brandenburg vassal had played him with his Edict of Potsdam. Louis, who outlived his dear cousin, the Victor of Fehrbellin, by twenty-seven troublous years, preferred

from that moment to hear as little as possible of the whole brood of Hohenzollern, particularly as "his dear pensioner's" son committed himself wholeheartedly to the side of the Emperor.

The money with which this apparently imperishable Bourbon, who clung so obstinately to life, had bought the Brandenburger's silence and sufferance was mainly spent on Brandenburg's standing army, on the shining weapon that the Great Elector was forging to his liking. Nevertheless, Frederick William, the first really soldierly Hohenzollern, latterly employed that weapon almost entirely for defence and not for offence. He gradually developed a taste for playing "the war game" even in peace. He appointed officers on his own sole authority, began to reconstruct the constitution of the Prussian Army, and to evolve the great drill system, which was subsequently to be perfected under his grandson and great-great-grandson. But he also spent a part of the French bribes on certain secondary fancies, firstly the creation of a sea-power (which he attempted even without command of the sea-coast of Pomerania), and, secondly, the acquisition of foreign colonies: two princely pastimes (revived in our day under his descendant William II, whose persistent preference for this one in particular among his ancestors was by no means without significance) that consumed far more funds than they ever brought in.

Yet the Great Elector got his fleet as a real bargain. He engaged for the purpose a certain "*Hofozeanjudé*" ("Court-Ocean-Jew")—to employ the name bestowed on the excellent Ballin under William II—in the person of Mynheer Benjamin Raule, a bankrupt shipowner from Middelburg. This man proposed to the Elector, never very fastidious in his choice of men and methods, that he should give him "letters of mark," according to usage and the international lawlessness of that time. In a very few weeks the energetic sailor Jew had succeeded in capturing one-and-

twenty Swedish ships. The first Electoral fleet, accordingly, was made up of these and a couple of hired Dutch frigates. With this, it must be confessed, somewhat "scrap-lot" of vessels—some still graded as "*Fleete*," "*Schnaue*," and "*Galiote*"—Frederick William calmly embarked upon his colonial policy on the model of the overseas trading companies of those days. He dispatched the cunning Hebrew, Raule, to the west coast of Africa, and Raule, accustomed to prompt action, then and there acquired for the Elector a little colony in Guinea, which was rapidly fortified by a major of the Prussian Army who followed hard on his heels, and was proudly christened "Grossfriedrichsberg." Like the fleet, the African trading company was of no very great value, unless a few apes, parrots, and niggers, which fetched ashore in Berlin with Raule, and were greeted with laughter and hand-clapping at Court, can be regarded as precious spoil. According to the accounts of travellers "Grossfriedrichsberg" looked like a village barn and garden. The Elector intended to develop it later, but as the merchants of Königsberg fought extremely shy of their ruler's speculative and airy projects, the wily Elector proposed to devote himself to the export of black slaves to the West Indies, and by means of this paying article to make his trading colony self-supporting. Competition in the catching and selling of these black wares was, however, too keen. He was undersold, particularly by the Dutch, the greatest experts in the trade at that time. The consequence was that "Grossfriedrichsberg" fell to pieces and silted up day by day. The African trading company, the Elector's great commercial venture, though piously subsidized for a time by his son, became increasingly insolvent after the death of the "*Hofozeanjude*," until its founder's grandson, the prosaic Frederick William I, who saw no visions and kept both feet planted firmly on the ground, sold Brandenburg's overseas possession—all that African junk, a ridiculous "chimera"—to Holland for a mere song.

From the bird's-eye view of the present day, accordingly, this Great Elector, whom a courtly and slavish school of historians would have us regard as a creative statesman and the founder of Brandenburg-Prussia, would seem to stand in a very questionable light. His whole policy pursued a zigzag course, resembling that of which we have had experience under his descendant William II, who so often invoked this ancestor's name. The Great Elector always fell short of real achievement. His two last passwords (he issued a fresh one daily to the guard) were "Amsterdam" and "London"; they certainly had no bearing on the remote future, as certain oracle-mongers would recently have liked to believe. If the two catchwords have any significance at all, they may perhaps point to the fact that Frederick in his last days was greatly interested in the doings of his first wife's nephew, with whom he was intimately acquainted, the third Prince of Orange, who a few weeks later entered England as a second William the Conqueror. Till the day of his death the Elector avoided an open breach with Louis XIV, his long-established source of income, and he did not join the great European league against that perpetual disturber of the peace. As a statesman, accordingly, Frederick was far inferior to the creative political leaders of his time upon the European stage; far below such men, that is, as Richelieu, Cromwell, Louis XIV, and William III; even below Charles X of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus's successor. Here is just one small example of his political shortsightedness. Leibniz, the seventeenth-century philosopher, offered the suggestion that he should attempt to interest the ambitious French monarch in Egypt, and by occupying him there divert his attention and wean him from his everlasting European intrigues—a truly Bismarckian conception, and one which the latter statesman carried out very adroitly in modern times with the French in Algiers and Tunis. Yet the Elector Frederick William, who had a poor opinion of learning

or art of any kind, took such suggestions as the mere vagaries of a bookworm, and gave them not the slightest consideration. Under Frederick William, German Brandenburg-Prussia began to pay less heed to the words of its thinkers and poets than to the meaningless, stammering speech of the weapons of war that is governed not by reason but by chance. Nevertheless, in accordance with the mode of the day, the Elector evinced an intermittent interest in the humanities. He had a library made of the books that lay neglected in the dreary rooms and cupboards of his castle, just as the truly scholarly Emperor Leopold had done before him in Vienna. More particularly, under the influence of his Louise Henrietta, he collected Dutch pictures and summoned Flemish painters to Berlin. He even had some decorations carried out by Nering in Berlin Castle. But ultimately he was far more interested in the fortifications and military equipment of a town than in its artistic adornment. He had his capital surrounded with ramparts, moats, and bastions after the Dutch manner. In Bielefeld, which came to the Mark of Brandenburg in 1666, he fixed his eye solely upon the fortress of Sparenberg above the town, which he at once munitioned and garrisoned afresh; and when in the same year Guericke, Magdeburg's enterprising *Bürgermeister*, wanted to show him the Cathedral and the wide street that he had laid out so successfully, the Elector, irritated, cried (in a tone of voice we came to know very well between 1888 and 1918), "The bulwarks first!"

To sum up, he was more a soldier than an administrator, more a fighting man than a patron of art or a statesman. Frederick William was, like William II, temperamentally too effervescent and hot-headed, too impetuous and inconstant to be a good pilot to the State. His fits of frenzied rage, during which the veins on his forehead (his head was really shaped rather like that of a fighting-cock) actually stood out like a comb, were the terror of those

who surrounded him. Even sturdy Dorothea, a far better match for this mad bull than mild, gentle Henrietta, did not venture into his neighbourhood at these times. His son, the Electoral Crown Prince, having experienced outbreaks of this frenzy on several occasions, never in later years ventured an interview alone with his father. How ill-judging and unskilful a statesman the Elector could be he proved ultimately by leaving a highly ambiguous will, in which he ignored the old *Dispositio Achillea* law of inheritance, divided his realm, and set up beside his eldest son, the rightful heir, his *five* younger sons by Dorothea, all as plenary, independent princes! This almost incredible will, which was only set aside thanks to the combined skill and kindness of the eldest son and heir, would be enough in itself, wrote Leibniz, to deprive the deceased Elector before the bar of history of his title "the Great."

Frederick William showed himself at his best as head of the Church, in that he, whose family from his grandfather's day had been "Reformed," attempted to bring the country, wholly Lutheran in Prussia and predominatingly Lutheran in the Mark, to consider reunion with the Reformed Church. His attempt was even less successful than was that of his descendant of the third generation, Frederick William III. The Edict he issued in 1664, in pursuance of his grandfather John Sigismund's efforts to put a stop to the perpetual mutual accusations of heresy and storms of abuse, was not for a moment obeyed. Even Paul Gerhardt, a gentle hymn-writer of that period, showed himself on this occasion as one of the most crabbed of the clerics, flatly declaring that members of the Reformed Church were not Christians, and subscribing to the denunciation uttered by one of his brothers in office: "He who is not Lutheran is accursed!" The Elector's troubles with these stiff-necked Lutheran clergy who, thick-skulled and obdurate as their founder, preferred to lose their benefices rather than cease their hue and cry after the Calvinists,

were to some extent compensated by the satisfaction he derived from his new French Huguenot subjects. Specimens of the craft of weaving and silk-spinning, which the fugitives had introduced into the Elector's Rhenish Provinces, gave him ease and delight in his last weeks of illness. Stricken with heart disease, he kept his hands on the reins of Government till two days before his death at the age of sixty-eight. He was for the most part his own minister and counsellor, an arrangement later adopted by his successor and admirer, William II. At the same time it must be admitted that, as in the case of his weaker descendant, he often believed himself to be leading when, as a matter of fact, he was himself led. He died in the plump arms of his second wife, a loyal nurse to her constantly ailing, melancholic, and impatient husband, and at the last she had come to dominate him completely. A clergyman read a prayer or two, and Frederick William, brave old ruler and warrior that he was, having closed his own eyes, went his way to the Evangelical God, whose instrument he—like William II—had from his youth up believed himself to be.

The poet who had undertaken to sing the fame and deeds of the Great Elector looked up quite dazed from his half-unwilling second investigation of "historical sources." He felt as if he were covered from head to foot with dust, and his hero had dwindled strangely. The poet made a last attempt or two to free his Muse's pinions from the mud which seemed to have accumulated there—and upon the figure of his demi-god too—during his immersion in contemporary records. Well, he would at least have liked to erect "a very dignified mausoleum" (like that the Great Elector himself had raised in the cathedral at Kölln on the Spree to the dead equerry Froben, who had saved his life at Fehrbellin) before finally abandoning his project of making him the subject of a drama. But in view of the ambiguous image of that strange wearer of the Electoral

crown now mirrored in the poet's mind he found even this task far from easy. It was only after long gazing at a reproduction of Schlüter's masterpiece, the bronze equestrian statue of the Great Elector for ever riding over the Long Bridge in Berlin, that inspiration came, and the poet inscribed on the cenotaph, the empty grave of his drama, this envoy:—

Sinister, mighty Prince! the fettered slaves
In brazen seeming round their brazen lord
Cower at thy statue's plinth, in seeming sleep,
Or seem to groan in unresolved discord.

In all the glory of the curlèd lock,
Lightning thy lance, thy eagle nose atilt,
Caesar, conforming to the *mode baroque*,
The square, strong fist grasping the sceptre's hilt—

How may we read thee, lying soul yet strong,
Reckless of aught save gain to thine and thee,
“ ’Tis I command it!” ever on thy tongue,
Mocking at scruples and dubiety?

Not nice in conscience as to ways and means
Where interest and aggrandizement did lie,
Thou ruledst thy State, defiant of the times,
The dread of all who came thy pathway nigh.

None knew thee: not a human soul might scan
The secret locked behind the brow's dark gate,
But, deep in solitude, the hot blood ran
Pulsing with almost universal hate!

A dark Colossus, o'er posterity
Thou towerest, thine enigma wilt not yield
To the curious generations, “God for me
And Brandenburg!” emblazoned on thy shield.

FREDERICK I

(1657-1713)

It was the misfortune of Frederick's life to have come into the world and into his inheritance as a second son. His father, the Great Elector, never really forgave Fate for condemning his tall, straight, splendidly handsome, intelligent, and attractive eldest son while sparing the second, who was dwarfish, sickly, and ugly. Charles Emil, written according to old usage in its Latin form Emilius, was the name of the Great Elector's short-lived first-born. A portrait by some old Dutch master of this really charming boy may be seen and admired to-day in Berlin Castle; in his slender hands the lad holds the ermine-trimmed electoral hat, the very hat his ugly, deformed brother was to wear after his death.

The imperious Great Elector could not set eyes on his second son without bewailing the first, and he never was on really good terms with his heir by default. On the contrary, the two were like cat and dog almost till the hour of his death, a not unusual state of affairs in Hohenzollern family history. After the death of pious Henrietta, authoress in collaboration with a certain Minister of State of the well-known hymn *Jesus meine Zuversicht*, the arbitrary old ruler married again, and within eight years begot seven more children by his second wife, the last Electress of Brandenburg. Dorothea was a robust, stirring housewife, a most capable person. The Elector gave her a large tract of land north of Berlin, which she parcelled out and sold to builders and speculators with great business acumen. She is consequently regarded as the foundress of Doroteenstadt and the part-foundress of Berlin, and is supposed to have planted the first tree in the famous avenue later known as

Unter den Linden. This strong-willed and determined lady did all in her power to make the future of her seven tall children as secure as possible. She did her duty loyally to the Great Elector, first as helpmeet and later as nurse, and she got him to make will after will in favour of her own seven sons. She was even suspected for a time of wanting to make away with her husband's children by his first wife, the Princess of the House of Orange, like some great lady of the Medicis. When the Margrave Louis, the Elector's third son by Louise Henrietta, died suddenly of spotted fever, it was whispered that Dorothea had had him poisoned, though, of course, the lying rumour must have raised the question as to why, in that case, the Electress did not begin her amiable practices upon the Electoral heir-apparent as the first obstacle in the way of herself and her sons. However that might be, the Electoral Prince, who, being physically a weakling, was not a very courageous person, was so filled with terror at seeing his brother suddenly death-stricken and lying-in-state all shrunk and twisted, that he bolted in a panic to Hanover with his young second wife, Sophia Charlotte, and sought refuge with her father, the first Elector of Hanover, who had never been on very good terms with the Great Elector, his Brandenburgish neighbour. Frederick William, however, launched his thunders from Berlin, commanding his son to leave Hanover at once and return home under pain of his paternal and Electoral displeasure. Frederick obeyed, but the next few years constantly widened the breach between father and son, particularly as the Hanoverian Princess Sophia Charlotte, who was intellectual and had received a Parisian education, loathed the old Elector's rough conversation, and took pleasure in egging on the son to ever-increasing bitterness against the father.

Eventually it came to each hatching plots against the other; the father, in response to his consort's incessant

promptings, made a will shortly before his death in which he left various large tracts of the Electorate to his younger sons, the Electoral heir-apparent's half-brothers; while the heir-apparent, for his part, struck up a friendship with the Court of Vienna behind his father's back and made over to Austria the district of Schwiebus, bordering on Silesia, which the old man had but just acquired, thereby, unknown to his gloomy progenitor in the old-fashioned palace at Potsdam, pocketing ten thousand ducats of Austrian gold to spend on his own various costly hobbies. A most disreputable step on the part of the young Hohenzollern prince, no doubt, but very explicable in view of the bad example shown him in the almost universal venality which flourished at the Court of his father, the pensioner of France. Matters went so far that the Electoral Crown Prince again fled from Berlin; this time to Cassel, where he found a well-meaning friend in his first father-in-law, the Duke of Hesse. This gentleman, assisted by Danckelmann, the Crown Prince's tutor and a practised hand in managing the Elector, succeeded in reconciling the son to the father, who was already gravely ill with heart disease.

Danckelmann was a Westphalian by birth, of bourgeois extraction and a member of the Reformed Church. He therefore bears a certain superficial resemblance to Hinzpeter, William II's pietistic tutor. But the resemblance is no more than superficial. Danckelmann, sprig of old Westphalian stock, was an essentially worthy and upright man, in no sort a toady like Hinzpeter, and, moreover, he was one of the best statesmen Brandenburg-Prussia ever possessed. During his ten years at the helm he carried on the best aspects of the great Elector's policy. He supported sea trade, improved the postal service, and gave hospitality to fresh bodies of religious refugees from France. Even if he did promote the interests of his own family by giving leading positions in the State to his six brothers, so that people talked of the "constellation Danckelmann," he

could well plead that these six brothers all proved Ministers of State of quite exceptional ability.

It was the Electress Sophia Charlotte, aided by one of the parties at Court, who eventually brought about this powerful and valuable statesman's fall. From the first she had regarded him with loathing as the favourite of the father-in-law she hated. Hanover and the welfare of her own adored father lay much nearer to her heart than Brandenburg; and she was not wrong in seeing in the honest if limited Danckelmann an obstacle to the ambitious schemes of her father, who was determined to make an Elector of Hanover out of a mere Duke of Brunswick-Lüneberg, just as, later, his son-in-law was determined to make a King out of an Elector. Moreover, clever Sophia Charlotte was not altogether mistaken as to the strong personal influence exercised by the dominant favourite Danckelmann in his character of ex-tutor over her husband as ex-pupil.

Frederick, indeed, unlike most Hohenzollerns, was naturally a trustful, amiable, and gentle creature. He gave proof of this at the very beginning of his reign, for no sooner was the power in his hands than he forgave his "wicked stepmother" all her machinations against himself, and came to as amicable an arrangement as possible with his stepbrothers, even though he did not confirm his father's over-generous settlements. As Elector he did not maintain a strict personal rule, like his father's, but left matters in the hands of his chief Ministers. He had a sense of loyalty to those servants of his, and, to take one example, shed a flood of tears when parting from Baron von Wartenberg, the fallen Danckelmann's successor in the supreme Ministerial office. The said Wartenberg was a regular sharper of a fellow—a gay native of the Palatinate, a smooth, toad-eating courtier who for fourteen years ably managed his lord through the two weakest points in his character, his vanity and his love of display. In



KING FREDERICK I

(Life-sized figure, the face and hands in wax, the uniform original, modelled during the King's lifetime.)

company with a certain count of the Holy Roman Empire, one von Wittgenstein, and a Count von Wartensleben (people talked of the country's "threefold Woe"), Wartenberg plunged the land and its ruler even deeper in debt, until the frugal, honest Crown Prince, the most economical of the Hohenzollerns following upon the most extravagant of them, brought about the spendthrift's fall.

The only man to whom the first King of Prussia behaved really shabbily was the aforementioned Danckelmann. So lenient in other matters, he actually, at his wife's instigation, had this man arrested and dragged off to Spandau. The good, portly Danckelmann was then subjected to an aimless trial which dragged on for years, at the conclusion of which he was deprived of all his property and placed under perpetual ward in a little fortress of the Mark. At his accession, the second King of Prussia, the son of Frederick and Sophia Charlotte, made good to some extent his parents' grave crime against the good and by then aged Danckelmann, although even he retained the former Minister's forfeited fortune as having become inalienable Crown property!

The first King of Prussia's name is seldom or never mentioned without talk of his love of pomp and parade. It is quite true that throughout his life he liked to flaunt an unexampled munificence. That, however, was partly due to the era in which he lived—an era in which Louis XIV, sun and example to all the lesser planetary princes, built his Versailles amongst the quagmires, and in which Louis XV was careful very considerably to increase the debts of his forebear. In that age it was no more than princely etiquette to spend more money than one possessed, and (as we all did as a matter of course in the World War) to leave the future and the coming generations to foot the bill. Indeed, the Electress Sophia Charlotte, Frederick's consort, over and above her distress at her uncouth only son's lack of all artistic and intellectual

inclinations, was shadowed by the fear that this "droll" fellow, this unlicked bear, whose parsimony was already apparent, might actually fall a victim to *avarice*! And in that uneconomical century avarice was held to be the ugliest and dirtiest of the vices. Frederick's lavishness, accordingly, was in no way extraordinary when compared with that of other Royal Courts in his day. He built, but he did not build beyond all reason. The castle in Berlin, the ruinous Kurfürstenburg that had barely accommodated his father, was to be enlarged by the Hamburger Andreas Schlüter, the greatest architect ever employed by the Hohenzollerns. When this master failed with a high tower, the Münzturm (Mint Tower), because its foundations were not strong enough, the King summoned the then more experienced Baron Eosander von Göthe to finish the castle (though, in the event, the latter was never able to complete his plans because in the meantime the "droll" Crown Prince had lumbered upon the throne). The Arsenal also, with its twenty-one "Masks of Dying Warriors," chiselled by Schlüter's hand, owes its present form to the first King of Prussia. At a later date Frederick changed the name of the village of Lietzenburg, near Berlin, to Charlottenburg, in honour of his dearly-loved second wife, and employed Herr von Göthe to enlarge the pretty country palace there, which had been built by his father's homely Court Architect, decorating it with an effective cupola. These, however, were in part necessary undertakings. The Charlottenburg Castle is an exception; but in that case Frederick's object was to impress his Sophia Charlotte, who was given to raving about the luxurious castles of Herrenhausen and Hanover. Moreover, had she not a playful way of calling him "her Aesop" from time to time in her letters, on account of his small stature and deformity, in allusion to the alleged bodily deficiencies of the Greek fable-writer? Anyhow, it pleased the King to equip the Charlottenburg Castle as a

place of elegant retirement, where his consort might discourse with the philosopher Leibniz and other *beaux esprits* and soul-mates, after the fashion set by the Hôtel Rambouillet and the *précieuses*. All kinds of pleasant Court festivities and amateur dramatic performances were held there, very like those set on foot at a later day in Altweimar by the young Duke and Goethe. One of these masquerades, reminiscent of Plundersweiler Fair, is described circumstantially by Leibniz in a long letter to the Queen's mother, old Sophia of Hanover. It is quite clear from this letter that the great thinker who taught the doctrine of the predestined harmony of all that is, well knew how to amuse himself, and felt that in Charlottenburg, too, he was in the best of all possible worlds. He paints the scene of this masquerade for us with a bold brush. At the close of the procession the King appeared (at that date he was still only Elector), his most exalted person arrayed in the garb of a Dutch sailor, and one of his noble Pomeranian gentlemen—they were beginning to grow obsequious even then—cried in stentorian tones from his stall:

*"Vivat Friedrich und Charlott',
Wer's nicht recht meint, ist ein Hundsfott."*

("Long live Frederick and Charlotte,
He who will not say so with all his heart is a dirty dog.")

The Electoral, later to be the Royal, pair kept separate establishments according to the etiquette of the time and the example of the French Court. Really it was quite unnecessary. The little deformed monarch can scarcely have had either the mind or the vigour for the wild debauches that suited the taste of the libertine Louis XIV. Still, it was the correct thing for monarchs, and the King would do nothing that was not *à la mode*. The fact that he had his own memorial statue sculptured even before that of his unquestionably greater father, testifies to his personal

vanity, the vanity of the humpback. He put the work in the hands of Schlüter, who had shown himself a sculptor of the first rank by his masks in the Berlin Arsenal. And yet the first Prussian monarch's monument suffered the same fate as his posthumous fame. People hardly knew what to do with it; it lost progressively in estimation, and was ultimately sent to Königsberg, where it was set up in the neighbourhood of the castle. On the other hand, the great statue of his mighty father, which Frederick subsequently had carved by Schlüter and cast in bronze by the able hand of Johannes Jakobi, stands proudly on the Long Bridge, Berlin, to this very day, and is justly esteemed the best of all the Hohenzollern monuments.

The delicate and sickly King was destined to outlive by eight years the dark and stately Sophia Charlotte, one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful, of the Queens of Prussia. She died in her beloved Hanover of an abscess in the throat, which she made worse by incessant attendance at balls and festivities. As a disciple of Leibniz she left this world with the most complete self-possession and without priestly consolation, glad, as she said, to draw a step nearer to the great riddle of Being, she, who had always sought an answer to the question of questions. She was not merely indifferent in face of death, she even jested, remarking to one of her Court ladies, "What a number of useless ceremonies will be performed over this body of mine!" adding, with her customary smiling summing-up of her spouse: "The King will provide you with the spectacle of most magnificent funeral obsequies!" And so, indeed, he did. He had his dead Queen brought back on her last home-coming to Berlin with the same wealth of pageantry that had attended her return from the coronation at Königsberg. On receipt of the news of his consort's death he wrote in the formal style of his day to her mother in Hanover: "Through Chamberlain von Ilten I have safely received, in your Electoral Highness's ever agreeable,

yet on this occasion most melancholy hand, notification of the tragic and unexpected decease of Her Blessed Majesty, my incomparable Queen!" and he thereupon set about providing those "magnificent obsequies" for her, with tolling of bells and funeral rites the whole way from Hanover to Berlin Cathedral, where he had her buried. None the less, only three years after the decease of his Sophia Charlotte, with whom, by his own admission, he had always lived happily, he allowed his advisers to persuade him to a third marriage. Was it not the custom, as was pointed out to him, for a queen to sit beside a king upon the throne? On a point of Court etiquette, accordingly, he provided himself with a new queen in the person of a Princess of Mecklenburg, exactly as, during Sophia Charlotte's lifetime, he had kept a mistress *en titre* in deference to the German-French *mode* of the day. He certainly asked very little of this lady in return for her salary. We may add that she was a charmer of no very exalted station—a publican's daughter, in fact. To tease her, Sophia Charlotte always took care to address her in French, of which "the person" understood not one word! Her relationship with the King consisted in his promenading at her side in dignified fashion for an hour each evening, in the garden in the summer and in winter within doors. Everything was regulated by the clock and by Court etiquette. For the rest, Frederick's last marriage was far less happy than his first brief union with a short-lived Princess of Hesse-Cassel. The poor, straight-laced Mecklenburgeress, who fell upon her knees at her first meeting with the King at Oranienburg, suffered subsequently in her conscience from the idea that she, a Lutheran, had given herself to a spouse of the Reformed religion, and, after a course of unremitting solitary prayer and penitential exercises, she developed religious mania.

Sophia Charlotte, with her cultivated taste and free-thinking intellectualism, was undoubtedly better suited to

the King, who possessed, in addition to his real personal amiability, a great reverence for learning and the arts. He not only transformed an "Academy for Young Noblemen" in Halle into a university, but he patronized men of learning then considered progressive—such as Spener, for example (whom he also valued highly as herald and genealogist), Francke, and, first and foremost, Thomæsius, the brilliant champion who combated the evil of trials for witchcraft. Pufendorf, one of the pioneers of "Natural Right" and the "Rights of Man," was summoned to Berlin by the King personally, there to indite a history of the acts of his father, the Great Elector. Frederick himself commanded that all secret, even the most secret, papers should be placed at the scholar's disposal. The distressing consequence was that Pufendorf, a thorough-going investigator and a very mole for original documents, came upon the old Elector's crooked and carefully concealed covenants with Louis XIV! The King paid assiduous court to Leibniz, who could never be persuaded to leave Hanover altogether, though the Queen, the philosopher's warm friend, succeeded in persuading the great thinker to pay frequent visits to Charlottenburg and to become the first president of the Prussian "*Societät der Wissenschaften*" (Scientific Association). This institution, later rechristened by Frederick the Great the "*Akademie der Wissenschaften*," was a scheme very dear to Leibniz. He had been the first to preach the revived idea of a republic of learning, and he admonished the Germans to exercise both their understanding and their language better than hitherto. The King of Prussia took an enthusiastic and sympathetic interest in every one of these efforts, even in the compilation of a big German dictionary. In all this he presents a striking contrast with his dull-witted, unintellectual son, who later was never weary of scoffing at his father's and his mother's work for the cause of culture. The "Academy of Arts" in Berlin, designed to promote "a more

widespread establishment and consequently more effective propagation of all the arts in the States of Brandenburg, and a more favourable reception of the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture in the same," was also the creation of the first King of Prussia. Indeed, there is no denying that the House of Hohenzollern owes the chief glory of its castles and their contents, even down to the baptismal silver for its new-born princelings, to this ruler.

The difference in the love of pomp and circumstance as evinced by the first Hohenzollern King and the last Hohenzollern Emperor—two men between whom many, Bismarck among others, have traced a resemblance—consists in this, that Frederick I, supported, it is true, by the taste of his time, has left little but beauty behind him, whereas William II brought artistic disaster upon whatever he touched. It is powerful testimony to Frederick's artistic *flair* that he succeeded in getting the foremost architects and the best Dutch painters of his time, such as Terwesten and de Coxies, to construct and to adorn his castles. It speaks well for his understanding that he could retain and employ such a man as Schlüter, the Brandenburgist artist whose last work in Berlin, before Frederick William I drove him out, was the adornment of the tombs of Frederic and Sophia Charlotte.

The very pivot, the obsession, one might say, of this ruler's life—and he was a hot-blooded fellow like many deformed persons—was a craving for Royal rank. Year after year Frederick strove for it with the single-mindedness of an inventor, the obstinacy of a child. There is actually a childish sound about the argument whereby he justified his life's aim to himself: "Seeing that I possess everything that pertains to the dignity of a king, and that in greater measure than many kings, why should I not endeavour to achieve the name of King?" he writes, with his own hand, in clear German script. And he strove for the goal he had thereby set himself with tough persistence until he attained

it. Elevations in the rank of princes were very much in vogue in Germany at that time, and Frederick the Great was unjust when he afterwards blamed his grandfather for aiming at kingly dignity for himself and his House before he possessed really kingly power. In Germany, upon all sides, dukes were being made electors, and electors, kings. Frederick's father-in-law, the ambitious Ernest Augustus of Hanover, concluded an electoral contract with Emperor Leopold I, and proudly signed himself first Elector of Hanover almost ten years before his son-in-law of Brandenburg attained the rank of King; and Augustus the Strong of Saxony, by making a solemn profession of Catholicism, obtained the Royal crown of Poland, which he had long been ogling, some four years before that event. Even William III, hereditary *Statthalter* of the Netherlands, notwithstanding his people's republican and independent sentiments, won himself the Royal crown of England by his political ability and worldly wisdom. Frederick, accordingly, was almost bound to do his best to become a king if he was not to be left entirely behind in the race by his princely compeers.

As time went on this object became a tyrannous obsession with Frederick. Even his acquiescence in the fall of his influential old tutor, Danckelmann, was probably brought about less by the urgency of Sophia Charlotte, who groaned under his tyranny and regarded him as a species of Tartuffe, than by the circumstance that Danckelmann's very sober ideas of politics, both foreign and domestic, were opposed to his former pupil's aspirations for the kingship, his not unreasonable argument being that the new dignity must necessarily involve an inexcusable increase of taxation, and that the country, which was not rich, could not afford such an outlay.

The future king, however, clung to his purpose. After the fall of Danckelmann, whom Frederick came actually to hate as the last persistent obstacle in his way, he pushed

forward business negotiations in Vienna, employing the most experienced agents, and not stinting funds up to the limit of his capacity. Leopold I, the reigning Emperor, bigoted and priest-ridden as he was, opposed him with all his might. Indeed, Vienna had long watched with anxiety the rise of "a new king of the Vandals" (as one of the Emperor's Court chancellors put it) upon the shores of the Baltic. At first the devotee Leopold would not hear of the advancement of his Brandenburgish vassal to the kingly rank except on the condition of his return, like his cousin of Saxony, to the bosom of the Catholic Church apart from which there is no salvation. The cunning Jesuits about the Emperor had already approached the ladies of the family, Sophia Charlotte and her lively, active mother, Sophia of Hanover, in order to work upon their husbands through them. "*Convertir le mari par la femme*" was, indeed, one of the foremost maxims of Jesuit statecraft. Through sheer love of argument, of which she was never tired, the freethinking Sophia Charlotte did actually enter into correspondence with one of the Emperor's confessors, a highly cultivated priest with a universal philosophy at his finger-tips, who even exercised his spell on Leibniz. We should certainly be mistaken in supposing that the freethinking Queen ever actually contemplated embracing Catholicism. That step was never seriously in question with her. But, like her favourite Leibniz, in his *Théodicée* and elsewhere, she could not but feel enthusiasm for the idea of a reunion of the Christian denominations, an idea which, in view of the quarrels of their various ministries, is unfortunately very unlikely to find speedy realization upon this distracted globe.

It is again in Frederick's favour that, strongly as he personally desired the kingship, he never allowed himself to be talked into any such barter of his soul. Without being a pietist, he had no mind to deny the faith of his father and of his God-fearing mother for the sake of the Prussian crown. Also he no doubt remembered the vow he had

made to his dying father to abide loyally by Evangelical truths. To his intense distress he thereupon saw the negotiations with Vienna begin to draw to a standstill; the intolerant Leopold was determined once for all to raise no heretic to the throne.

It was then that the so-called "War of the Spanish Succession," the great struggle into which all Europe was plunged on the question of the Habsburgs' Spanish inheritance, suddenly and unexpectedly put the almost despairing Elector of Brandenburg in possession of his long and hotly coveted honour, the title of "Majesty." Even before the long-invalided King Carlos, the last Habsburger in Madrid, had ceased to breathe, a scramble began for his hide—at first only on paper. Partition treaties and pacts were concluded, in which the two leading rôles were played by the calculating Prince of Orange, William III of Holland and England, and Louis XIV of France. The Emperor meanwhile formed an alliance with Brandenburg as an "Auxiliary Power"—the formal expression of the day—in which contract the Elector of Brandenburg was solemnly accorded the kingly rank, Leopold, menaced by war with France, giving formal consent, "should the Elector, now or in the future, or at any time pleasing to him, have himself proclaimed and crowned King of his Dukedom of Prussia." In Vienna they were heartily weary of the whole matter, and no longer attached great importance to it. Only the far-seeing Prince Eugene said, when he heard of the agreement, "The Emperor ought to hang the Ministers who gave him such perfidious counsel!"

It was a blessing for Frederick that the matter was at last concluded, for the little gentleman, who was in any case fidgety and not too robust, got into such a state of irritability and agitation over the difficulties attending the execution of his dearest wish that he could scarcely sleep, and, as the Austrian commissioner informed Vienna, would certainly have died of chagrin had anything arisen

to prevent the coronation at the eleventh hour. For the Royal robes, the sceptre and crown, all executed under the personal supervision of the Elector, had been ready weeks beforehand. The price of the crown was not small; but in that generous age no one cared to haggle over it. In order to raise money to bribe the great ones of Poland before his election as king, Augustus the Strong had sold the last acres of his ancestral estates at Wettin, the domain of Petersberg near Halle, the hereditary jurisdiction of Quedlinburg, and the Imperial jurisdiction of Nordhausen to Frederick of Brandenburg. The latter, however, paid the Emperor in troops for his consent to his new honour. Without making any further concession to Catholicism, he promised the gloomy Emperor Leopold eight thousand soldiers and the Electoral vote of Brandenburg for the House of Habsburg in perpetuity. His great-grandson Frederick, who hated the Habsburgs, and had, in general, a very poor opinion of his grandfather, blamed him for this, and classed him among the *rois mercenaires*, the "venal monarchs." But, in the first place, what else was the Great Elector, whom Frederick held in such high honour though he sold himself for years on end to Germany's bitterest enemy, to France and her *Louis le Grand*? And, in the second place, the idea of feudal allegiance to Austria and the Habsburg was inbred, a living sentiment in every Hohenzollern down to Frederick the Great, and, after him, from Frederick William II down to Frederick William IV. Frederick the Great's grandfather, therefore, did nothing at all infamous in binding himself to the Emperor, and, at the very worst, acted more honourably than Frederick the Great's great-grandfather, the "most faithless of all faithless vassals," as Louis XIV came to name him. The Brandenburger's eight thousand well-equipped men entered the Imperial service forthwith and fought on the Rhine against the French and under Prince Eugene in Italy with better luck and very much better results than

any Brandenburgish troops had done under the celebrated Great Elector. They particularly distinguished themselves by their imperturbable courage in the victorious Battle of Höchstädt, under the leadership of Dessau, still a young man at that time, whose fame dated from that day. Frederick I himself was a better ruler than soldier—a fact which has injured him in the eyes of certain historians, who appraise a monarch solely for his feats of war. Unlike his father, who loved the turmoil and uproar of battle, he kept for the most part out of range of cannon and attended hardly one of his campaigns in person. Once only he visited the Brandenburgish tents before Bonn, where His Majesty at once succeeded in effecting a reconciliation between two quarrelsome generals. Otherwise he was quite content to leave whatever warlike laurels were to be plucked in his day to the Duke of Marlborough and to Prince Eugene, who both, particularly the Englishman, showed great skill in cajoling him. And yet, despite Frederick's personal predilection for peace, there were only three years of peace in his reign of twenty-five years, while in the almost equally long period during which his military son, Prussia's drill- and task-master, sat upon the throne there were at most three years of war—that is, if Frederick William I's petty brawls and skirmishes are to be called wars at all—leading one to observe, not for the first time, that in world history the absurd and the illogical occurs to an extent that is almost incredible!

The King does not deserve to be upbraided for selling his soldiers, still less to be compared—as Frederick the Great, who himself sacrificed thousands of men to his own ambitions, compared him—to “the roving Tartars,” who “sell their flocks to the shambles of the butchers of Podolia.” At that time subjects and troops were, to the Princes of Germany, merely so much merchandise wherewith to transact one's personal business. This human capital (or material, as it came to be called in the World

War) was disposed of as a matter of course, without hesitation or qualms of conscience. Some few decades later German princes, especially in Middle and South Germany, disposed of their men to America, wholesale or retail, like cattle, to be shot or bayoneted there over matters with which they had no concern whatever. No prince in those days thought of the pains and pangs of these hired warriors; or, if they did, they supposed they would be immortalized by some artist's hand as "Masks of Dying Warriors" to decorate arsenals, like those most moving death's-heads carved by Schlüter in Prussia's Temple of Fame, an armoury whose grim furniture must surely preach to all beholders the blessings of perpetual peace.

To the last Elector of Brandenburg the drove of men he dispatched to the Emperor brought the fulfilment of his life's dream, his coronation at Königsberg. This town, the town of his birth, was now, as the chief town of Prussia, to be the scene of his second birth, his rebirth as a King. At the cost of an enormous outlay the supreme event of Frederick's life was staged there in the bitter depths of winter in the year 1700. "Little in great matters and great in little matters," according to his grandson's epigram, he produced the drama in most masterly fashion. With a personal suite of two hundred souls, with thirty thousand horses and numberless coaches, the Elector and his Sophia Charlotte set out from Berlin. Three more divisions of courtiers, bodyguards, and a hundred Swiss were to follow. They travelled for thirteen days, but only during the mornings. After noon there were banquets and balls, and the King to be was overwhelmed by numberless speeches and addresses. A very exact representation of the coronation procession which took place when at last Königsburg was reached has come down to us in the form of two prints, whose dignified solemnity is very diverting to the modern eye. Majesty's self wore a scarlet suit with diamond buttons. His robe, embroidered all over with

crowns and eagles in gold, was secured in front by a clasp in which were set three diamonds, valued at a hundred thousand thalers, and especially celebrated by the Court poet. The castle chapel at Königsberg was adorned with gold brocade and purple velvet. The exalted Order of the Black Eagle was solemnly founded in perpetual memory of Prussia's elevation to the rank of a Sovereign State. The King, unassisted by any priest, set the crown upon his own brow with his own hands, and immediately afterwards personally crowned the kneeling Sophia Charlotte, whose black tresses admirably set off the precious circlet. Unfortunately the Queen, finding subsequent formalities rather lengthy, could not refrain from taking an occasional pinch of snuff, and this somewhat nettled the King, to whom all forms and ceremonies were matters of the deepest solemnity. All possible ceremonies having been performed (Frederick and Augustus the Strong were the greatest authorities of their day in these matters), ceremonies whose "circumstantial description," still extant in every detail for all to read, had at one time to be learned by heart in Prussian day-schools, His Prussian Majesty, the crown upon his head, proceeded under a resplendent canopy to the church, there to be anointed and proclaimed to the blare of trumpets, the strains of the organ, and the hymns of the choir. His favourite, the ever-faithful Wartenberg, bore the gigantic Royal train. A guard of Swiss surrounded the King during this solemnity. The Court preacher intoned "Good luck to King Frederick, King in Prussia, and may the Lord be to him even as He has been hitherto, that his Royal sceptre may wax ever greater and greater," and the choir chanted in reply, "Amen, and good luck to the King, God grant him long to live!" The same was thereupon repeated for the Queen. Afterwards a special coronation mintage of six thousand thalers was thrown to the populace in the castle square, and while the King feasted in the Muscovite hall, illu-

minated by thousands of snow-white wax candles, an ox with gilt horns was roasted for the folk outside. A fountain in the stable-yard gushed with sixteen hogsheads of red wine and white, so that this first coronation at Königsberg was not a whit less sumptuous and extravagant than the most lavish coronation of any German Emperor in the Römerberg at Frankfort-on-Main. Polish travellers, who knew nothing of this national event and happened to enter the town that night by the blue light of a firework display, could only suppose from the uproar and shouting that the whole place had gone mad.

Frederick I, as we may now call him, has been very severely censured for this extremely costly coronation, and even at the time it was not only the banished Danckelmann, imprisoned in the little town of Peitz, who shook his great, full-bottomed wig over such doings. The inordinate numbers of Court officials, the chamberlains, valets, equerries, historiographers, architects, chamber-musicians, buglers, pages, page-masters, body-surgeons, grooms-of-the-chambers, chocolate-makers, Court barbers, quarter-masters, butlers, table-layers, masters of the table-linen, lackeys, footmen, Hungarians, Moors, Court midwives, cooks, waiters, cellarers, and pastry-cooks, to whom his Royal State gave employment and salaries, have all been reckoned up against him. He has been reproached with celebrating each and every Royal occasion with truly "Asiatic magnificence"—his own grandson's derogatory phrase. Against all this, however, it may be argued, firstly, that this display is excused by the spendthrift times of the *Roi Soleil*; and, secondly, that as first King in Prussia (the jealousy of the Poles, as erstwhile feudal lords of Prussia, would not permit him to say *of* Prussia) Frederick was faced with the task of ushering a new dignity into the world in dignified fashion. This, and the foundation of the High Order of the Black Eagle, he accomplished in a manner that was truly impressive, and, moreover, formally

and ceremonially correct to the last detail, so that no loop-hole was left for fault-finders; and he, and consequently his successors, took their places in the circle of monarchs with a majesty which was not merely snobbish but truly regal and dignified. The very fact of the papistical Imperial Court's bitter and unconcealed opposition to the elevation of an Evangelical Calvinist prince urged Frederick to invest his coronation with all possible consequence and splendour. In reply to the young Crown Prince's parsimony, which gained on him as he grew towards manhood, that jovial toper, Count Wartenberg, not unjustly remarked that on occasions occurring but once in a lifetime a king should not be a skinflint or count every chicken that goes into the pot. An uncommon event like a coronation surely demands a certain degree of pomp, a large solemnity, and the question arises here as to whether Bismarck himself, when he crowned his William with the Imperial crown, would not have done better to make it a great solemnity in Aix or Frankfort-on-Main, thus linking it with the old tradition of German Imperialism (as the then Crown Prince, afterwards the Emperor Frederick, gloriously envisioned it) rather than a mere cold, stiff, purely military ceremony. But it must, of course, be remembered that William I assumed the Imperial title against his will, and consequently would never have lent himself to making a great popular jubilation, an illuminated page of the history book, out of the distasteful proceedings.

Frederick was an honourable exception to the generality of Hohenzollerns in that he allowed his son a large share in affairs of government during the last few years of his reign, even though that son was in all things his father's opposite. The King even sacrificed his personal favourite, Count Wartenberg, together with all the latter's extremely venal adherents at Court, to his uncouth and ill-mannered heir, and allowed that all-too-willing young man, aided by Kameke—a very devil for order—in the post of controller-

of-the-household to manage and turn topsy-turvy the whole Royal household of Prussia. He himself, the first king to reign in Berlin, spent his last declining years in elegant retirement behind the richly decorated doors of his State apartments, which he had furnished more expensively and tastefully than any in Brandenburg before his day or since. Despite his feeble constitution he attained a greater age than his sturdy, vigorous son, who was but fifty-two when death struck from his brows the pearl- and diamond-encrusted diadem which his father had won for himself and for all his Hohenzollern successors. Frederick passed away with the utmost correctness in his Royal palace in Berlin. With a silk handkerchief, folded in four, he himself dried the death-sweat on his brow, upon which the holy oil, poured from a vessel of jasper, had glistened thirteen years ago at his coronation. Then, while the bells duly tolled according to his orders, he closed his eyes and proceeded in kingly wise upon his last journey.

In November 1918, on the morning following the flight of the last-crowned Hohenzollern, the custodian who opened the doors of the Hohenzollern Museum at Castle Montbijou in Berlin, very anxiously bolted and barred in those disturbed days, was surprised to see something lying on the floor in the furthestmost room. It proved to be the exceedingly lifelike waxwork figure of the first King of Prussia. Some accident or other, perhaps the shots of the insurgent Spartacists rioting in the streets outside, had cast it down from the throne on which it had been placed. The scandalized caretaker laboriously raised the dwarfish figure and obsequiously beat the dust out of the already somewhat moth-eaten Royal ermines. Then, for the first time in his life, came the realization that he was merely the custodian of a museum now!

FREDERICK WILLIAM I

(1688-1740)

FREDERICK WILLIAM I came to be the *beau idéal* of all the secondary-school masters and poetasters in Germany, because he was supposed to stand in his own person for the prerogative of the State as against the individual, and the sacred duty of obedience and self-subordination to a higher power. In actual fact this prince, who demanded obedience *à outrance* from those about him, was singularly incapable of ruling himself. Quite apart from the nightmare portrait drawn of him by his own daughter, Wilhelmina, Margravine of Bayreuth, other observers of his life and character have reported so many instances of his despotism, unbridled passion, and ferocity, that time should certainly erase that picture of the ever-righteous advocate of the principle of authority which narrow minds bounded by petty ideas of school discipline have made of him. Throughout his life and reign sudden onsets of brute anger that brought the melancholic man very near insanity caused him to commit many an act of injustice impossible to rectify afterwards. At such times his own children had to be protected from his frenzy. His daughter, the Wilhelmina aforementioned, came within an ace of being strangled by him with a curtain cord for some childish naughtiness; and that his son, the great Frederick, ever came to the throne, and was not spitted on his father's sword, he owed solely to the Generals who flung themselves between the boy and his frenzied sire; even then not before he had over and over again been seized by the long locks the King loathed, and whipped and kicked like a cur till the blood flowed. His subjects, too, had more than sufficient experience of his hot fits, as, for

instance, a certain Berlin Jew whom the King pursued and beat almost to death with his cane, at the same time uttering the notorious words, "You are not to fear me, you are to love me, *love me!*" This well-known speech, a happier version of Caligula's historic menace, shows, of course, that, like most hot-heads, this hectoring monarch had a streak of good nature concealed somewhere within him. But heaven help those who got on his wrong side, or did not know how to take him! The mere fact that he was a torment and a standing menace to his family, and to all who came near him, ought to have prevented anyone from ever holding him up as a pattern and example to youth.

Even in the society he loved best, among his brothers of the "Tobacco Parliament" and the flowing bowl, his own boon-companions, whose outward features we may still study to-day in the Hohenzollern Museum in Berlin, this utterly unbridled prince, amidst numerous coarse obscenities, played practical jokes that not only offended against every canon of good taste, but even imperilled the health and the very lives of the victims of his pleasantries. When he had Royal visitors he would hale them off with scant ceremony to his den, where it was his standing joke to make them drunk on dark Ducksteiner beer quaffed from huge brown covered tankards, or sick from smoking tobacco in Dutch clay-pipes—a simple, if rough, amusement, of which this model of Prussian monarchs never wearied.

The King's book knowledge was of the scantiest, but the Spartan severity of his methods won from his subjects, and still wins to-day from servile minds, more reverence than he deserves in view of his brutality and meanness. In his luxurious father's Court, and in the society of his highly cultured mother, the philosophical Queen Sophia Charlotte, the friend of Leibniz, he apparently suffered reactions not uncommon in persons of simple mentality brought up in homes where there is incessant talk of the arts and sciences. Boys of that type, growing up in an

intellectual atmosphere, are inclined, when they grow to manhood, to revenge themselves on culture itself for what they have been made to suffer in their robust childhood through its devotees and enthusiasts.

Rude jeers at learning formed, after his brutal drinking-jests, the King's principal amusement in the "Tobacco Parliament" Smoking Club, an institution which, for the matter of that, he had not even invented for himself, but had copied from his father, though the latter, of course, had conducted it more genteelly and in the society of his consort, Sophia Charlotte. Their son kept these social gatherings of his strictly free of petticoats, and he liked to start debates on such themes as "Men of learning are all quacks and fools," or "All our knowledge is not worth a dog's tail." He did not even stop short at the happy notion of giving one of his boon-companions, a certain rackety *magister*, the post of President of the Academy of Sciences, thus ridiculing his mother's noble foundation, Berlin's Scientific Association, in the most boorish fashion.

It was not till he began, at an early age, to suffer in health from the effects of his ill-regulated way of life, his unbridled guzzling and gourmandizing, that he moderated his indulgence in such follies somewhat, and began to develop more strongly that strain of religiosity characteristic of so many of the Hohenzollerns. In the first decade of his reign he expelled Wolf the philosopher, the most powerful thinker in the country, from the University of Halle as an infidel, and forbade him, under penalty of hanging, ever to enter any part of his domains again. In his ignorance the King had allowed himself to be persuaded that Wolf taught a doctrine which would encourage "*die lange Kerle*" (his tall soldiers) to abscond; and whoever touched him upon this, his most sensitive spot, his ruling passion, the collection of giant soldiers at Potsdam whom he daily marched up and down in the pleasure gardens there, shouting and damning to his heart's content, was for

Frederick William a thief and "pig-dog," who must at all costs be extirpated. A scoundrel like Wolf who could preach determinism and promulgate the blasphemous opinion that man has no free will, had no place whatever in his well-regulated State, where bounden duty and service counted for all in all. During his last declining years the King's piety took the form of the bitterest self-reproaches and fits of blackest gloom, during which he more than once contemplated abdication, and having first transformed his castle into a barracks, now made it an oratory. The Margravine of Bayreuth lays the chief blame for the King's excess of piety at the door of another famous son of Halle, the antithesis of Wolf, the theologian Francke, who in her view would have liked to make the whole world one joyless orphanage.

She probably somewhat overestimated the personal influence of this light of the Church, although she early perceived, and rightly, that her father was a man who could very easily be taken in. This strong King, whose favourite words were "simplicity" and "firmness," was really not difficult to handle, even to lead in strings, once one had acquired the understanding and the "hands" for him. On one occasion he was completely taken in by a Hungarian adventurer, a disreputable soldier of fortune, who cheated him into believing that there was a plot on foot against him in Vienna; he was to be surprised and abducted from Berlin, the Crown Prince was to be made a Catholic, and Prussia degraded once more to the position of vassal State to Austria. Later, another man gained complete ascendancy over him, Von Seckendorff, Count of the Holy Roman Empire, an old swashbuckler and Austria's long-established ambassador in Berlin. Von Seckendorff had won his laurels under Prince Eugene. That great artist in war had made a powerful impression on Frederick William I, who, when all is said and done, was a peacetime warrior and no more. Seckendorff was long his evil

angel, as Frederick the Great recognized later. The Bavarian Count was not at all indisposed to underline his already uncouth manners and habits to please the King, and when in the "Tobacco Parliament" or out hunting at Nauen he told the open-mouthed collector of tall soldiers taller stories about the battles of Höchstädt, Malplaquet, and Oudenaarde, about Marlborough and the bellicose Elector Maximilian Emanuel of Bavaria, the King's close-cropped hair bristled for very rapture.

In point of fact the martial Monarch, who passed his days amidst trumpet-calls, everlasting drilling, and words of command, fought no great wars and spilled very little of his subjects' blood, a fact which the English historian Macaulay very rightly enters on the credit side of his life's account. He put his whole soul into parades and manœuvres, and he kept out of serious conflicts with a subconscious sense, intermittently a conscious realization, of his own mental limitations. Having a natural dislike of anything like over-boldness, one might even say boldness, he kept his powder dry until it began to be said all over Germany, "The Prussians don't shoot!" Such talk did not trouble him in the least; active only by fits and starts, it did not provoke him to any foolish sabre-rattling. In particular he preserved friendly relations with Austria, which was ably represented at his Court by Seckendorff, "the adroit negotiator," as Prince Eugene called him. He would have found the wars his great and ambitious eldest son later contrived to wage with the Imperial House of Habsburg, as puzzling and inexplicable as did that monarch's younger brothers, who in due time were to shake disapproving heads over their brother's lust for war.

Although a bold and saucy blackguard found it easy enough to get on the King's right side, it was quite another matter for such as attempted to approach him by the way of flattery. The sturdy, four-square ruler cherished an invincible loathing for all courtiers and sycophants. It was

one of his best characteristics that he had nothing but contempt for vermin of the type that crawled at his feet in the hope of influencing him. "Any sort of flattery makes me sick," he used to say heartily, "for I am as dirty a dog as any other!" and, indeed, as his great son reported later, with him it was always "no sooner thought than said." He showed that he had a will of his own, directly he ascended the throne at twenty-five years of age, by dictating a letter to Dessau (even at that date famous for his successes in the War of the Spanish Succession, and later the inventor of the iron ramrod) in the following terms: "Inform Prince von Dessau that I am myself the King of Prussia's Minister of Finance and Field-Marshal." The Prussian Junkers, who stood out obstinately against his ordinances, soon got a taste of that resolute will in the well-known remark, "It is my purpose to ruin the Junkers' authority, to establish the sovereignty as firmly as a rock of bronze—and I leave the Herren Junkers the wind from the Landtag."

With these bold words, soon to be followed up by still bolder deeds, he set to work to emasculate the aristocracy of the Mark—a work begun by the first Hohenzollern to come to Brandenburg, Frederick, whilom Burgrave of Nuremberg, and to be carried on still more vigorously by his son, the great Fritz, by means of the complete militarization of the nobility, so that the old, defiant watchword of the Junkers,

*"Unser König absolut,
Wenn er unsern Willen tut."*

("Our King is absolute, as long as he does our will"), fell more and more into disuse. With all his wrongheadedness Frederick William I could be clear-sighted enough at times, and even handle people who affected his interests with considerable address. He contrived to get on very well with Augustus the Strong, whose utterly immoral habits

of life could not but repel him, and he even resisted the temptation to preach his Royal cousin moral sermons on that monarch's frequent visits: Peter the Great found "the fat, chubby Potsdam animal" quite agreeable, and on taking leave of Prussia kissed and slobbered over him repeatedly, to the blunt King's utter horror. The Emperor Charles VI, the last Habsburg in the male line and the father of Maria Theresa, was asked by Frederick William to stand sponsor for his eldest son, that son later destined to be such an enemy to the House of Habsburg, as Hannibal was to Rome. It was only his own brother-in-law, King George II of England, who no doubt had frequent reason to be annoyed by the family characteristic of crazy obstinacy as manifested in the man's sister, who would have nothing whatever to do with him, and always referred to him as "my brother, the sergeant." Moreover, the pair had loathed each other as children, and, to their mothers' distress, often came to fisticuffs in the Castle at Herrenhausen. Frederick William I reciprocated his brother-in-law's dislike most heartily, and when his busy recruiting officer and press-gangsmen permitted himself, not for the first time, to go poaching in Hanover so that matters came near actual hostilities between them, he was actually taken with the notion, at once rustic and knightly, of challenging his brother-in-law George to personal combat, sabre against sabre! The quarrel was settled, however, and no open breach ever occurred between the two rulers. In the important question of Prussia's relations with England, as in other matters, the King left his great son no encumbered legacy.

On many other points besides (Frederick himself, who wrote and spoke very ill, called them "*pungks*" [correct German "*punkte*"]) this pig-headed man showed himself capable of compliance. In the "appreciation" which the son eventually accorded the father, Frederick the Great mentions such a point in some detail, touching



KING FREDERICK WILLIAM I

Statue by Heinrich Bettkober, 1797

the disputed hay-crop of a certain meadow on the frontiers of Prussia and Hanover. The crotchety King was not unsuccessful in his schemes for his own and his country's advantage. Without any very heavy sacrifice he succeeded, thanks to old Dessau's good generalship, in acquiring the whole of Hither Pomerania as far as Peene near Usedom and Wollin. Taken on the whole, he managed Prussia's domestic economy very well. It was here that his remarkable thrift, his simplicity, and the genius for detail which his son and successor praised as his best characteristic, took brilliant effect. Instead of the hundred chamberlains kept by his splendour-loving sire, he refused to maintain more than six. To the horror of his household he himself drew up the meagre bill of fare for himself and them—and his own tastes were of the homeliest. But to his heir he left domestic and military resources in such a state of apple-pie order as has never been seen before or since in Prussia. "With such a splendid standing army, so well organized and so well equipped, as a weapon ready to his hand, his ambitious son was bound to work mischief!" cried Voltaire in dismay when he received news of the outbreak of the first Silesian war.

Frederick William I was untouched by that passion for glory which impelled his son to wage three bloody and terrible wars. His chief care was for the replenishing of his scantily populated dominions with inhabitants: "*peuplieren*," as it was expressed in the official German of the day, which still teemed with words borrowed from the foreigner. "I prize men above all other riches," he said once to Coceji, one of Prussia's foremost jurists, whom the King himself had summoned to Berlin. Accordingly he was delighted to receive the Salzburg Protestants, exiled for their faith, and later gave a similar welcome to the Polish dissenters; "with the proviso that they are willing to conform to the established customs of this country." Another attractive quality in the Royal boor was his intense

devotion to cleanliness; five times daily, like a Mussulman, he washed and groomed himself as he would have done a blood-horse. In consequence he had a horror of the salves, pomades, scents, and artificial methods of hair-dressing in vogue in his day. All superfluous display he bluntly called "tomfoolery." "My son must not get into the habit of taking snuff," was one of his last admonitions to his eldest-born. "People who are perpetually choking and polluting their nostrils with tobacco are no better than pigs, to my mind."

In his marriage with Sophia Dorothea, daughter of George I of Hanover and England, a woman of upright, graceful carriage and striking beauty, despite the scars of small-pox, he observed a standard of purity remarkable and exceptional at that time. He esteemed faith in wedlock above everything, and his "*Fieckchen*" or "*Olle*," as he affectionately named his consort, had no complaints to make against him on that head. On one solitary occasion he came near stepping aside from the path with some buxom lady of the Court, but when she, finding that the monarch, uncivilized in the ways of love, proposed to begin straight away with the end of the little romance, gave him a sound slap in the face, he desisted at once from this and all similar adventures. No less than fourteen children were the fruit of his marriage, most of whom, indeed, died in infancy. The four-square Frederick William had no comprehension of the more complicated relationships possible either in love or friendship. When he heard of his heir's highly emotional relations with Lieutenant von Katte, he fumed against the pair as "Sodomites," and was not content till his effeminate son's partner in guilt had been decapitated before the eyes of his companion and his polluted corpse shovelled underground like so much carrion. It is significant and typical, moreover, that the King's domestic severity was directed almost solely against his two eldest children, Fritz and Minchen, while the

younger brood, particularly Augustus William, who was much handsomer than his great brother Fritz, had a very tolerable time with him, and were even occasionally spoiled. His type of mind would have been better adapted to rule some less extensive sphere than the increasingly important Kingdom of Prussia. As a farmer and landowner, perhaps, his solid old-fashioned virtues might have developed on wholesomer lines, and might have been more effective in action than they could be when, as the ruler of a great nation, he was perpetually faced with difficulties and varying types of human character beyond his intellectual scope. As for his officers, whom he drew from the aristocracy of the Mark, since his most exalted maxim was "Who bites me, I'll bite back!" he soon established matters on a satisfactory footing with them, and raised them to the position of highest standing in his monarchy. At heart he was a soldier. He was the first prince to make military uniform the regulation Court dress, and during the last fifteen years of his reign he himself never wore anything else. Neither by his charming letters nor his stoical bearing did the son he hated so long and so bitterly ever come so near winning his respect as by his request, after his abortive attempt at flight and consequent imprisonment, to be allowed again to wear his "*Portepeee*," with its silver sword-knot. "What!" rejoiced the King, whose health was already failing, "Can there, after all, be a touch of the soldier in the wretched, backboneless lad?" The choleric, hot-headed monarch found relations with the civilian officials of his Kingdom of Prussia a more difficult matter. Many a time he raged against these "*Geheimräte*" of ours, whom Bismarck, too, was to sigh over a century later. He abused them for "ink-scrawlers" and "*tausendsakramentsche Blakisten*," "damned good-for-nothings"; and when they would not dance to his piping or stood upon any of their "lousy" formalities, he would threaten them with "Devil take me, but I'll have every sluggard of you hanged and roasted like the

Czar if you don't do as I say, and let matters drag on like this; I'll treat you all as rebels!" Nevertheless, thanks to his own delight in work, or, better expressed, his inverted mania for work, he accomplished much and exercised a good influence on his subordinates. When slaving away in the *Kanzlei*, he used to draw linen sleeves over the arms of his uniform, which he no doubt felt he would rather splash with blood than with ink. As a consequence of his uncompromising attitude towards bribery Frederick William succeeded in gathering about him an administrative *personnel* which was excellent for its day, which was very largely honest, and which, led by his simple example, had not yet become conceited and uppish. His strict and homely schooling of the bureaucracy continued to operate long after his death, and gave the Prussian State administration the stamp of his personality. Hater of the Muses as he was, he did not build much. Soon after his accession his art-loving father's two Court architects, Andreas Schlüter and Eosander von Göthe, were forced to go abroad for lack of orders. The first, Schlüter, after a mythical attempt at suicide in the Spree, found his way to St. Petersburg, where he entered the service of the town's great founder, and shortly afterwards died. The second, handsome Baron von Göthe, whose name was soon to be eclipsed by the similarly sounding one of the poet, proceeded to Sweden, not forgetting to take with him his predecessor's valuable collection of miniatures and some important plans of Prussian fortifications, and eventually, after a most involved history as Court architect to Augustus the Strong, died in Dresden. The King's principal foundations are the *Charité* in Berlin, and the great Military Orphanage for the children, mostly illegitimate, of soldiers, in his beloved Potsdam, which he raised from the status of a miserable fishing village to that of a respectable town. He patronized the Fine Arts very little, and among musicians cared only for Handel. Nevertheless, he was not entirely without an

understanding for and appreciation of painting, and later in Wusterhausen, as his dropsy increased day by day, he sketched out a few pictures and, groaning, signed them, "*In tormentis pinxit F. W. R.*" But up to the last the thing his eyes best loved to dwell on was the cloud of dust kicked up by his "long fellows," his six-foot *colossi*, as he marched them straight forward or wheeled them in fan-shaped formation, feeling all the while as proud as one of those Dutch windmills he loved to set up when it turns its broad sails in the breeze. As was to be expected of him, he met his early death like a man. The courage with which, as a God-fearing man, he faced his last hour in the Potsdam he loved so dearly, stirred his great son, who came hurrying to the deathbed, as nothing else could in his father. "He died with the resolution of an angel and without suffering greatly, our dear father," wrote Frederick after the monarch's death to his sister Wilhelmina in Bayreuth, where she was already preparing her colours for that malicious portrait of her sire she was yet to paint. To Voltaire the newly acceded King, still shaken by the event, began a letter: "Dear Friend,—My fate is now changed; I have witnessed the last moments of a King, his death-agony, his death. Verily, before acceding to the throne, I needed this stern lesson to convince me of the vanity of human greatness."

In the history of his House that Frederick wrote long afterwards as a ripe statesman, he has left us a picture of his father which must be at least as exaggerated in flattery as his sister's caricature of that strange eccentric's evil qualities. When Frederick wrote that epitaph upon the father whose early decease filled him with intense if unexpressed content, he surely forgot the many bitter tears he and his sister had shed when that father forced them both, against their inclinations, against even the interests of the State, merely to "teach" them—that is to say, to torment and harry them—into hated wedlock with a petty

princess and prince; he forgot the days in the prison of Kustrin, when day after day his father threatened to deprive him of the succession in favour of his younger and more worthy brother, Augustus William, and he had whispered through his clenched teeth for minutes together, "This beast! This beast!"; forgot, too, perhaps, how he had prayed there night after night in French to his Heavenly Father in bitter hatred of his earthly father, "Lord God, if there is a God, send that this red bull burst asunder!"

FREDERICK II, THE GREAT

(1712-1786)

EPISODES

(1)

IN the gloomy State bedroom of Berlin Castle, where kings are born, the din of the drums and fifes played by the guard below sounded particularly loud because of the echoes the martial music waked in the old castle walls. The Queen, who was in labour, sent to ask her unaccommodating husband to get them to cease the rattle of drums for a little. That insensitive person, however, merely said, "*Ach was!* Fiekchen, my wife, is as sound as a bell, and the youngster will have to get used to the glorious, warlike noise betimes. Even if he is to die at once, like my first two boys, who had to make the return journey to God when they had scarcely peeped into this world, I see no reason why I should countermand my grenadiers' Brandenburgish morning and evening concert for that!" And so it was. The King's first surviving son grew up to the sound of drum and fife, whose music was to accompany his whole existence until the day of his death.

(2)

It is told that when Napoleon met various nephews and successors of the great Frederick on a hunting expedition, and, in particular, had enjoyed a very thorough dose of the company of that monosyllabic simpleton, Frederick William III, he remarked to Murat: "How a genius ever found his way into that Hohenzollern family is, and remains, an eternally impenetrable mystery of creation!"

(3)

Sophia Dorothea, mother of Frederick the Great, sat one day at some Court function beside Prince Eugene. The Prince, who as a rule preferred the society of men to that of women, was quite enchanted by something exceedingly fresh and natural in this gracious lady's conversation, and even found her rather low, masculine voice far from disagreeable. Though apparently neither so learned nor so witty as her sainted aunt Sophia Charlotte, the first Queen of Prussia, her successor excelled her in the charms of childlikeness and simplicity. Prince Eugene recalled the story told of a secret elopement planned between this Queen's mother and a Count von Königsmark, who, in attempting to flee with the woman he loved, was surprised and strangled in her chamber by order of her husband, the then Elector of Hanover. When the banquet was over he said to his suite: "*Sapristi!* They say the mother had to pay for her love by long years of imprisonment; but if she looked like her daughter one can almost understand that a man would risk death, as Königsmark did, merely to kiss her feet."

(4)

Frederick, like Goethe, grew up with a sister for a playmate. Goethe's sister, it is true, was a year younger than her brother; while Wilhelmina, the future Margravine of Bayreuth, began her brief life more than three years sooner than her beloved Fritz. Even as a child she was a chatterbox, not to say a gossip, and it was she who taught her sickly, scared, and silent little brother to talk—in French, of course. The children were placed under the care of a Mme. de Rocoulles, a member of the Reformed Church, a refugee from Paris, who had instructed their father in childhood, and her pupils spoke only French. One evening, when Wilhelmina and Fritz had been left to

play by themselves, the sister, scampering across a little hall hung with weapons, brushed against a musket, which fell to the floor with a terrifying clatter. Screaming with terror the little girl fled, thinking it had gone off, though indeed it had not. Frederick, meanwhile, picked up the weapon quite calmly and began to look at it closely without a sign of fear. It was thus that he was found by a Moorish attendant, the one whom Pesne has painted in his picture of the Royal children. The black man took the dangerous weapon from the child, but could not afterwards resist telling the King about the boy's singular courage.

Frederick William, on hearing the story, first gave the Moor a sound cuff on the ear for not having kept better watch on the youngsters, and then a taler for bringing him such happy news of his son.

(5)

The King commanded his seven-year-old son's two military instructors, Count von Finkenstein and Colonel von Kalkstein, to do all in their power "to imbue Our son with a true love of the soldier's life, and to impress upon him that, just as nothing in the world can bring a Prince such honour and renown as the sword, so he himself would become an object of scorn to all the world if he were not to love the same and to seek in it his sole glory."

When the Prince's French tutor, M. Duhan, the son of a Protestant refugee, heard of this Royal utterance, he admonished his pupil not on that account to despise the Sciences and the Fine Arts. The whole glory of war was naught but empty clatter if it had no higher object to spiritualize and justify it. The flute-solo that the boy thereupon played to his revered Duhan, his "true father," as he later called him, somewhat reassured the art-loving Frenchman as to the Crown Prince's propensities, and yet he could not but admit to himself that his scholar's enthu-

siasm for a Caesar or an Alexander was of a far more glowing quality than for all the poets and artists put together.

(6)

The earliest breach between the King and the Crown Prince was not, however, caused by the boy's flute-playing, unpleasing as this particular instrument's soft quality made it to the father, who would have been infinitely less annoyed if his son had blown a trumpet. The King's rage was directed, in the first instance, against the Crown Prince's long, fair hair, which he wore in free, flowing locks. Sophia Dorothea succeeded for a time in shielding her son's beautiful curls, but a day came at last when the paternal authority ordered a Court chirurgeon to cut off the side-locks out of hand. The chirurgeon, seeing the Prince's eyes full of tears, hastily combed the greater part of those side-locks back to the nape of the neck, taking only just enough of the rest to appease the King's ire, and was rewarded by the touched and delighted Frederick with a kiss on the hand. The son of this chirurgeon repeated the anecdote, which was current in his family, to Frederick the Great himself in old age, without, however, mentioning the kiss. The King had had a paralytic stroke, and the chirurgeon was just preparing to apply a leech to his neck. Growling, Frederick offered him his bare nape, and, shaking his almost bald head, he said: "Not many leaves left on the tree now! My father would surely have scolded less over my youthful locks could he have seen me now, fleeced by age and time!"

(7)

When Frederick was sixteen years old he fell dangerously ill. His mother, the Queen, laid the blame for his illness on a certain long evening which his father had forced the

boy to spend in the "Tobacco Parliament." The smoke-laden air, and the unaccustomed drink thus too early forced upon him, had eventually made the boy—"the effeminate lad," as his father called him—thoroughly ill; this to the delight of the King, who split his sides laughing to see the delicate and almost incredibly lean Crown Prince in the throes of vomiting. When he was called to account by the Queen, who was utterly horrified by her son's wasted appearance, he merely went on laughing and remarked: "What about your convictions that everything is predestined? Well, do honour for once to your infamous heresy! Whatever happens in this world, you say *toujours*, must have been determined from all eternity! I believe, *au contraire*, that if there were any good in your son he would die, but I am quite certain he will not—weeds never do."

(8)

Frederick William I was vexed beyond measure when Noltenius, his Court chaplain, informed him that for some time past his son had made extremely little progress in "Christianity." Commands from the highest quarter thereupon compelled the Crown Prince to learn so many Biblical texts in so short a time that he acquired a permanent distaste for Holy Writ. Nevertheless, when young Fritz subsequently underwent a public examination in the hundred-and-twenty-nine questions on the fundamental doctrines of German Calvinism contained in the Heidelberg Catechism—touching man's lost estate, his redemption, and his debt of gratitude in prayer and obedience, etc.—he did well enough, and the King, expressing his thanks to the trusty divine, assured him that he now had every hope that his son would grow up a sound orthodox Christian.

(9)

As is well known, a time came when Frederick sought escape from further subjection to his father's educational system in flight. The King's naked brutality to his eldest son had at last reached such a pitch that not only did he deprive him of practically every pleasure and prohibit any traffic whatever with any of the Fine Arts, but he threatened him with his cane every time he set eyes on the boy. In addition—and this perhaps is the most revolting trait in Frederick William's character—he would constantly taunt the lad in the most contemptuous terms, telling him that had *his* father treated *him* with such contumely he would have run away a thousand times over—all this with the sole object of forcing his eldest son to abdicate his Royal birthright in favour of his handsomer, taller, but far less intelligent, younger brother, Augustus William. Frederick, however, showed signs of greatness even then by frustrating all the King's expectations and withstanding all such pressure put upon him.

On one occasion young Fritz was prepared to abscond when on a visit to Saxony, but Augustus the Strong was anxious to keep on terms with his colleague of Prussia, and entreated the Crown Prince not to carry out his project in his territory. A second time he had high hopes of escaping his father's cruelty while attending him by his express command on a journey into South Germany. The plot was discovered, however, the Crown Prince conveyed in irons to a ship on the Rhine, and Lieutenant Katte, his accomplice and devoted helper in the proposed flight, arrested in Berlin. When the King first caught sight of his son on the ship's deck he fell upon him like a wild beast and struck him in the face till the blood flowed. In suppressed bitterness of spirit Frederick cried: "Never has the countenance of a Brandenburger been so shamed!"

A few months later, when Lieutenant Katte, having been

sentenced to death by a court-martial, was executed by the King's express command under the prison window—that is, under the very eyes of the Crown Prince—Frederick called to the heroic friend who met his end with such nobility and courage: "Forgive me, dear Katte, for having brought this misfortune upon you! Would that I could mingle with the tears I pour out upon this, the place of thy death, the blood my father's cruelty but lately drew from my cheeks and brow!" Katte's headless corpse lay steaming in the cold November air before the Prince's prison till two o'clock that afternoon. This, too, was by express command of the King.

When later Jean Jacques Rousseau learned of these almost incredible proceedings, he wrote: "Is it any wonder that Frederick 'the Great,' as he is called, has become a scorner of mankind? And did I not do wisely and prudently in never visiting the monarch's Court, despite his repeated invitations?" In our own days a certain town-councillor of Küstrin, an extremist of the "Left," at a discussion as to the best means of commemorating the history of the town, proposed that a monument should be erected on the place of Katte's execution, bearing the inscription: "Here, by Royal caprice, perished Lieutenant Katte, guiltless, for the sake of his friend Frederick, later named the Great." But the proposal was rejected amidst the hisses and groans of the servile majority.

(10)

During the sittings of the court-martial convoked to consider his son's guilt, the King, who never referred to him except as the "*deserteur*," repeatedly demanded the lad's head from his generals. It was only their determined opposition which saved the life of the greatest of the Hohenzollerns. The court did not even pass the death sentence on Lieutenant Katte, but was content to dismiss

him the service with a long term of imprisonment. The King, however, committed a political murder and vented his hatred of Katte by declaring, on his own absolute authority and against the verdict of the court-martial, that he was a traitor and worthy of death.

Certain very warm endearments that had passed between the Crown Prince and Katte came under discussion during the protracted proceedings of the court, and these, above all else, inflamed the King with rage. Had not Katte called from the block itself to his Royal friend, "Death for so sweet a Prince is sweet!"? It was in vain that the Prince's tutor, the discerning Frenchman Duhan, tried to explain to the King that friendships of a sentimental nature, sentimentally expressed, are frequent enough between young people in the years of adolescence. The "immoral" Frenchman was forthwith banished to Memel as a punishment for such "swinish" talk; and when the aged Field-Marshal-in-Chief, von Wartensleben, pleaded, trembling and in pathetic terms, for the life of his hitherto blameless nephew Katte, the King raved at him with shouts of "An unclean beast must be exposed! No Sodomite may live! And if you ask it of me I am prepared to have the death sentence carried out on my son also!" But the sorrowful old grey-headed general did not do him the favour of desiring him to commit any further crime.

(II)

The following story shows, however, that the Royal turkey-cock was not difficult to deceive. At first the Crown Prince's lot in the fortress at Küstrin was wretched in the extreme, for Frederick, in his youthful pride, scorned to grovel before the messengers his father sent him. Later, however, he realized that nothing was to be got from his father except by submission—or a semblance of it which would answer equally well—and set himself to play the

part of contrite penitent. He staged his first performance when his father sent him a chaplain, and having convinced that simple-minded cleric with surprising celerity, he swore to his parent's next deputation that he meant in future to be strictly obedient to the King's will, and to act in all things as became a loyal subject and son. He followed this up by a series of very able and submissive letters, by which he succeeded in gradually modifying his father's attitude.

Frederick William I now had the satisfaction of feeling that his scheme of education for his eldest son might be considered provisionally complete.

(12)

The rapidly ageing monarch's worst crime against his great son was undoubtedly his choice for the unfortunate lad of a wife after his own—Frederick William's—heart, though he knew perfectly well that their tastes in this matter differed absolutely. Having made his selection, he forced his son into immediate marriage with this “neither ugly nor beautiful but God-fearing person.” The whole of the correspondence relating to this unhappy event, more especially the Crown Prince's letters to General von Grumbkow, his confidant at the time, is extant to-day. The wily Grumbkow, the bought and bribed creature of Seckendorff and Austria, played a crooked and double game as agent between father and son, and no doubt quenched the last sparks of faith in human nature in the breast of Prussia's heir. Up to the last moment Frederick hoped he would be allowed to marry an English princess, a plan which his mother favoured and which would also have been far better from the standpoint of Prussian foreign policy.

But it was Frederick William's deliberate purpose to keep down and humiliate his son, and he forced a narrow

little German princess upon him, one whose youthful charms, such as they were, were not enhanced by an increasingly (or diminishingly) bad set of teeth. Directly after the wedding, which was celebrated at the country seat of Salzdahlum, the Crown Prince returned alone, "without the foolish creature," to his beloved garrison at Ruppin. Nothing had happened. There was merely one more unhappy princess in the world.

(13)

As a consolation, or as a reward, for his marriage, Frederick's father had given him Castle Rheinsberg, situated on one of Prussia's gloomy and sombre lakes. The Prince liked to call it "Remusberg." When the castle was being enlarged under Knobelsdorff's supervision, a few putative Roman remains had been unearthed, and the romantic Crown Prince liked to pretend to himself that Remus, the mythical first King of Rome, had not been murdered by his brother Romulus, but had fled hither to "Ultima Thule" and had been buried beneath this hill on the lake-side, thereafter called "Remusberg." It was here that Frederick spent his happiest and most peaceful years, not yet burdened by military but merely by literary ambitions, busy over yew hedges, fountains, boating parties, pictures, books, plays, flutes, decorative porcelain, violins, and friends such as Jordan, Kayserling, and Fouqué. Even the Crown Princess, who was there with her ladies, is said to have drawn nearer to Frederick than; though how near, indeed, no one can say.

There Frederick wrote his *Observations on the Present Condition of the European State System* and his *Treatise against Machiavelli*, whose views, however, he was later to endorse repeatedly in his own rule. At times he even appeared as an actor in Voltairean pieces produced at Rheinsberg.

Even to-day some vestige of the beauty and grace of those

care-free years haunts the rather derelict little castle and neglected park. When, long afterwards, Frederick went there as King to visit his brother Henry, who was spending the evening of his days at Rheinsberg with his French friends, he gazed, his soul filled with melancholy, at the "Garden Room" where he had once led a minuet attired in a "*seladon*" green silk coat adorned with big silver facings and tassels over a richly embroidered silver brocade waistcoat. He looked down at the threadbare uniform that now hung upon his meagre form. Sadly old Fritz tapped out a march with his long, claw-like fingers upon the solid writing-desk, whistling dryly through the toothless mouth that had long forgotten how to play the flute. The desk was the very desk at which he had written his earliest essays and poems; there, too, he had made his initial plans against Silesia and the Imperial House of Habsburg; now only the bore-worms picked busily within the wood, once wet with Frederick's tears as he first read Voltaire's *Brutus*.

(14)

King Frederick William I drew near his end. The Crown Prince, summoned by courier to the dying man's side, found him swollen with dropsy, seated in a wheeled chair in the garden of the Palace at Potsdam. The King had wound up his life's accounts with a final bequest of his stag-hounds to old Dessau, because, as he said in the letter he dictated to accompany them, he had hunted his last in this world, and his eldest son was no lover of the chase and never would be. The surly old man, however, was still in a state of some perturbation because he could not get from the attendant clergy a plain answer to his question as to whether there were any recruits to be had in Heaven. Much troubled, the death-rattle already in his throat, he stretched out both hands to his son as the young man came hastening to his side clad in full regimentals. Frederick

winked aside at the Minister when he heard the subject in dispute, and as the clergyman had no desire to be on bad terms with the new ruler, he hastened to soothe the dying man with the assurance that drilling went on up there just as here below. Whereupon Frederick William I, consoled and happy at the prospect of continuing his earthly activities in Heaven, closed his eyes and died.

(15)

When, on the death of the Emperor Charles V, last of the Habsburg Emperors, Frederick announced to his brothers that he intended to demand the cession of Silesia from the new Empress Maria Theresa, they thought at first that he must be mentally deranged. It may be remarked in passing that this was an impression Frederick was in future to make very frequently, both upon them and upon others. "He really does seem to have lost his reason at last!" is an expression that recurs often enough in the letters of his nearest relations. "He seemed to me a raving madman when I saw him once on horseback, bareheaded and singing like a boy, at the head of his troops, riding back from some parade or other here in Potsdam," wrote the English traveller and wit Walpole¹ when he saw Frederick as an old man.

As he unfolded his cold-blooded plans of attack upon the all-unsuspecting young Empress, his brothers tried in vain to explain to him that his hereditary claims to the Duchies of Jägerndorff, Liegnitz, Brieg, and Wohlau were long obsolete and could hardly be made good now. "I know that, too," Frederick replied, laughing, and it was the only answer he vouchsafed them. All the time he kept catching with his hand at the empty air above his head. When he had left them, Prince Henry, who best understood him, had to explain to the other brothers, who regarded this remark-

¹ Horace Walpole? I have been unable to trace this reference.—(TRANS.)

able behaviour, taken together with his whole astounding policy, as proof of sheer lunacy, that the young King clearly recognized ambition alone as the mainspring of conduct, and that his strange gesture had probably indicated his longing to grasp the laurels which this first and all subsequent campaigns would doubtless confer upon him.

(16)

It amused and comforted Napoleon all his life long to remember the fact that in Frederick the Great's first battle, the Battle of Mollwitz, Frederick himself had drawn a complete blank. The attacks he led in person having miscarried, he was forced to leave the field and, riding off into the night in search of reinforcements, did not learn till the next morning that the battle had, as it happened, been won without his assistance by one of his Generals, namely, Schwerin. The King's frankness and courage afterwards in making no attempt to spare himself or to conceal this first little mishap, his own incapacity and personal rebuff, are, after all, the finest legacy from a battle that resulted in the conquest of Silesia and the first treacherous peace treaty with Maria Theresa. During this brief campaign Frederick kept up a witty interchange of letters with his friend Jordan, whom he playfully teased for his dislike of war and timorousness, and he bore it smiling when Jordan took his revenge in a long satirical poem ending:—

First battlefields, my Prince, are like first gallantries,
Skill cannot be acquired except by slow degrees,
But you did very well; you trotted round about,
Some fourteen miles, they say, you heard the fighters shout;
Firstly you sought to learn the art of riding,
Next to learn conquest, last to take a hiding!
Yet during that same ride and other daring hits,
You won, all unawares, the victory of Mollwitz!

Afterwards, as all the world knows, Frederick became most proficient in the art of war an art in which, according

to his view, only practice can make perfect. His military writings, out of date as they are, are still worth turning through, and in a long didactic poem he pays homage to warfare as an art for which none as yet had been crowned by the Muses. It is evidence of the extraordinary childishness of which this strange and great warrior was capable that he can say there:—

*“Kein Lorbeer soll des Siegers Stirn bedecken
Wenn Missetaten seinen Ruhm beflecken!”*

(“No laurel-crown the Victor shall proclaim
If evil deeds his fair report defame!”)

(17)

Brother Henry had proved a true prophet. The first Silesian war quickly led to a second. As Commander-in-Chief and the victor of Hohenfriedeberg and Soor, Frederick this time bore himself decidedly better. Nevertheless, it was the pious old Dessau's last great victory at Kesselsdorf that actually clinched the success of the campaign. Before this battle the old warrior put up surely the most delightful prayer to Heaven ever uttered by soldier. “Dear God, graciously assist me this day! Or, if Thou wilt not, at least do not aid those rascals the enemy, but just stand aside and see what happens. Amen.”

The King congratulated the old fellow afterwards without a trace of jealousy, glad that he should make so glorious an exit. Leopold von Dessau's triumph was followed by a new Silesian treaty in Dresden. Frederick permitted the old soldier to explain the whole *champ de bataille* to him, listening with enthralled attention, and decorated the Prince, his “dearly beloved cousin,” with his highest order, “*Pour le mérite*,” conferred by his own hand. Dessau, however, had rather lost his taste for such gew-gaws. He

remarked dryly to his son, "My one regret is that your mother, my Anneliese, did not live to see this victory. But, after all, I would rather have this Order than the hempen collar the King would certainly have put round my neck—he was in the devil of a rage at my slowness!—if *par hasard* the *bataille* had been lost."

(18)

Much has been written about Frederick the Great's relations with Voltaire, some of it by the two parties concerned, some of it by other prejudiced persons. One thing is clear—the pair were worthy of each other; the King of his philosopher, with whom he was altogether enchanted on first acquaintance at Castle Moyland, in Prussia's dominion of Cleves; and the philosopher of his monarch, whom, to his friends of both sexes, he compared enthusiastically with Cæsar, with Augustus, and with Marcus Aurelius. When Voltaire delayed long in accepting an invitation to Berlin, Frederick managed to precipitate his decision by the cunning device of rendering him suspect at the French Court; while Voltaire used the privileged position Frederick accorded him in Prussia for illicit commercial transactions, designed to increase his already respectable fortune and to secure his financial independence for the future. Although the two men, the ruler and the thinker, saw through and at times despised each other, they nevertheless hung together like a pair of lovers who kiss and quarrel and make it up again.

As a matter of course Voltaire was at once given the place of honour at the King's brilliant "Round Table," which Menzel, his posthumous apologist, has described for us. Among such shining conversational lights as La Mettrie, Argens, Algarotti, Chasot, Keith, and Maupertuis, Voltaire shone undisputed as a star of the first

magnitude, ever full of wit, full of ideas, and full of malice. For the most part he attended only the King's supper-parties, glittering with wit and candle-light. At midday there were too many generals and officers present for his taste. Moreover, the other members of the Hohenzollern family, the King's mother and his consort, all prized him so highly that for a long period a cover was always laid for Voltaire at each of their tables. French only was spoken, so that at the Court at Potsdam in those days one might fancy oneself in Paris. Even the servants, who often had to stand on duty all night till their legs swelled with fatigue, learned by degrees to understand a word or two of the language.

Even after the pair separated—Voltaire had spent almost two years at the Prussian Court—they showed themselves unchanged: Frederick by having the philosopher arrested in Frankfort and robbed of all papers which might serve to show himself, the King, in an unfavourable light abroad; Voltaire by publishing reminiscences of his sojourn in Berlin, in which he accused half the King's Court of homosexuality, not to mention worse vices.

Nevertheless, the King and his favourite poet continued to correspond, after these amenities, as before, in the most courteous terms; or, when the fit took them, would tell each other the truth, circumstantially and with unvarnished plainness. Voltaire honoured Frederick as a great free-thinker who dared to proclaim his pagan-philosophical outlook on all occasions from the very throne—a thing which neither a Napoleon nor even a Bismarck was bold enough to do after him. Frederick, on the other hand, never ceased to esteem Voltaire as the first poet and clearest thinker of his age. He was glad to outlive Voltaire by a few years, if only for the opportunity it gave him of speaking the Frenchman's funeral oration at the Berlin Academy—a funeral oration which has survived and can bear comparison with the best of those of the Greeks and the

Romans. During his last days Frederick wrote these lines:—

“Fate, though to me unkind, gave one thing fair,
To see, to know, to honour great Voltaire!”

(19)

One day Frederick led Voltaire through the castle at Potsdam, intending to show him the room in which his father died. They happened to pass by an office on the ground floor where a fleeting glance showed Voltaire a number of clerks industriously at work among ponderous tomes and dusty documents. The scratching of their quills could be heard in the passage without. “Those fellows, remarked Frederick, “are employed to search every available source in support of my legal claims to Silesia, claims which in the meantime have long been demonstrated by this sword of mine,” and he laid his hand lightly on his weapon’s hilt. Voltaire, however, ever an unswerving champion and worshipper of mind, replied: “Even your sword will break some day, but the quills will go on writing for ever!”

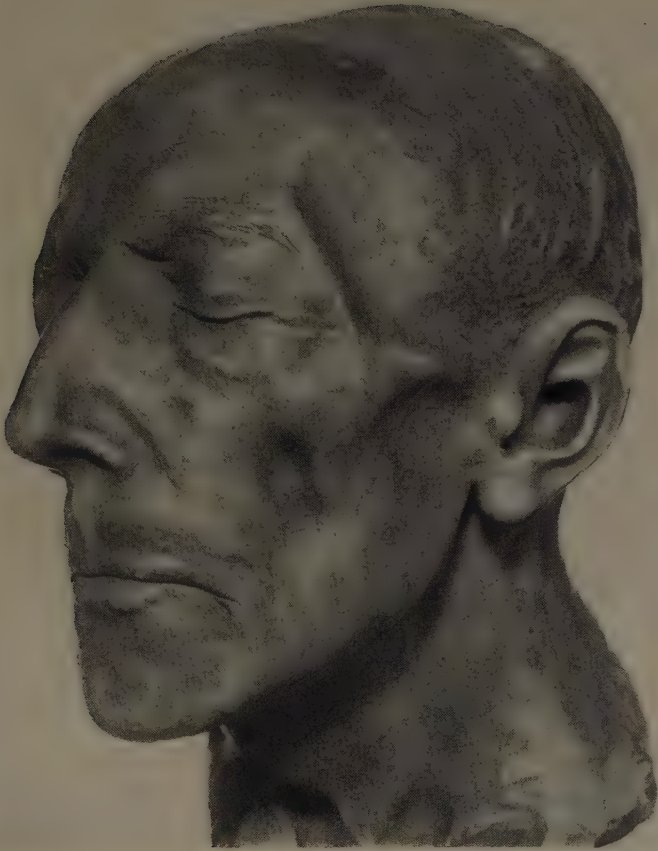
(20)

An English historian—it was Macaulay—in his essay on Frederick the Great, who is regarded in England as the most “national” of German monarchs, gibes repeatedly at the King’s versifying, and accuses him of being vain of his achievements as a poet. In both these matters he is unjust. More than once Frederick admitted that he had no very high opinion of his verses and only wrote them as a salve to the wounds and smarts inflicted on him by life. They were written most often amid the uproar and smoke of battle, or in the bitterness of defeat. The Englishman’s assertion that Voltaire “would not for the half of Frederick’s

kingdom have consented to father Frederick's verses," cannot be maintained. No! Apart from a few malicious remarks which were second-nature to him, Voltaire valued the King's poems exceedingly. Some of them were so excellent that Voltaire was feared they might be taken for his own. Even in German translations some of the King's odes, such as *The Ode to Fame*, the *Epistles*, *On Perfidy*, *On True Happiness*, *On Humanity*, and *On the Existence of God*, sound well to this day. So also do Frederick's musical compositions, which even John Sebastian Bach applauded. Wherever in his poems Frederick treats of death, he attains the heroic simplicity and grandeur that marks his magnificent and truly noble last will and testament. His philosophical essays have as much interest for the modern reader as the works of Schopenhauer. "Take away his crown and all its appurtenances of pomp and splendour, and there still remains a richly endowed, a god-like being," was Voltaire's verdict on the man who forbade him to address him as "Your Majesty."

(21)

There is something startling, almost shocking, for the modern German in Frederick's aversion for, nay active hatred of, all things German. The *Nibelungenlied* was to him an abomination, Hans Sachs a mere ignorant, half-savage shoemaker. Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* made him feel sick, and he laughed to scorn Gottsched's efforts on behalf of the German tongue, which in his opinion was beyond hope of improvement unless by radical alteration from the foundations. The only German poet he would tolerate was good, pious Gellert, and then only as a weak imitator of La Fontaine and Boileau. He had as little understanding or appreciation of the paintings of Grünewald or Dürer as of the works of Shakespeare. In Dresden, his chosen winter



KING FREDERICK THE GREAT
Death-mask by Johann Eckstein

quarters during the Seven Years War, when he was shown an old Cranach representing the Judgment of Paris, his only comment was an obscene and not even witty jest upon the naked figure of the goddess. The recent attempt to make this man of all men, this scorner of Germany, who himself spoke, wrote, and thought nothing but French, the prototype and champion of a New German folk movement, betrays the total lack, the absolute negation, of the historic sense among us in the present day.

When a pile of new German books was brought to the King's bedside during his last illness he said, with a sigh of relief: "Thank God, I need not look at any more of this rubbish!"; and when Ritter von Zimmermann, the doctor he had summoned, who was also a writer, tried to bring the conversation round to Goethe's *Werther*, the recently published fashionable success of the moment, which he understood Frederick to have read, at least in a French translation, the patient replied: "I would rather talk to you about my evacuations than about these wretched German poets!"

(22)

It is far too little known, and is not even yet taught in our schools, that King Frederick did, in fact, lose the Seven Years War. He had hoped, at least, to be able to pocket Saxony as reward for all those years of slaughter and butchery—Saxony, with which he had picked a quarrel, which he had coolly invaded at the outbreak of war, and which he had since drained of resources year after year. Voltaire, in his letters, tried several times to make it clear to him that a number of the Royal Courts and crowned heads of Europe obstinately persisted in regarding his attack on Saxony as a breach of international law. From his retreat in Warsaw, to which he was forced by Frederick to retire for a time, Augustus III, the weak though not

untalented son of Augustus the Strong, clearly proved his case, namely, that his sole reason for entering into negotiations with other Powers was to protect himself against his perpetually aggressive neighbour. The fact was understood and conceded on all hands, with the result that Frederick was obliged by the Peace of Hubertusburg to forgo all claim on Saxony, and gained not so much as a single foot of territory at the conclusion of a struggle that had cost him his youth, his temper, and his faith in life. "Of course it would have been an advantage," he wrote to his dearest friend from his last headquarters on Saxon soil, "if the country had acquired a few provinces. But, as this matter did not rest with me but with Fortune, the thought of it in no way disturbs my rest." A philosophical conclusion, no doubt, but one which might have been reached with less expenditure of money and human life. The multitude of economies which Fritz practised from the end of the Seven Years War to the day of his death, three-and-twenty years later, were no more than sufficient to make good the losses incurred in this—as Voltaire judged it—most costly and useless of all his wars. Shrunken and bowed, a poor invalid, as grey as his pet donkeys at Potsdam, Frederick crawled back to his capital from this campaign. He felt himself a very beggar when, for the first time after his return, he paced the splendid rooms of Berlin Castle, which his Royal grandfather had built; for, during the war, he had had Schlüter's masterpiece, the great solid silver trumpeters in the *baroque* "Hall of Knights," melted down and replaced by a clever imitation in wood. He was a little comforted to learn that the room's acoustic properties were thereby improved, and that unless one knew of it one could really scarcely detect the wooden fake.

When peace was at last signed he ordered Graun's *Te Deum* to be privately performed in the chapel of Castle Charlottenburg, but this was not the result of any relapse

into orthodoxy. At the conclusion of the performance he remarked, in his cool fashion, to the Court chaplain, who had eagerly hastened to attend the ceremony, that he had just wanted to hear if the organ was still in tune.

(23)

"*Grand Dieu! Ma sœur de Bayreuth!*" wept Frederick when he heard of the death of his favourite sister. After each one of his heavy reverses in the field he had to support the additional blow of the news of some deep personal loss: after Kolin, his loved and revered mother died; after Hochkirch, his beloved sister. "I have too much feeling," sobbed the King on these occasions—he who accepted the wholesale slaughter of his grenadiers with becoming composure as something which, as far as he was concerned, could not be helped. In such hours he more than ever sought consolation in poetry. He also drew strength from the thought that he could at any moment set a term to his own life and sufferings, for during the Seven Years War he always carried a tiny flask of poison about his person. He had made all testamentary dispositions, so that, should the threat of imprisonment, sentence of death, or banishment force him to extremities, his self-chosen end would result in no additional confusion in his country or his family. Several such dispositions of his are extant, giving most careful directions in case of any disaster to himself; they are as stylistically perfect as the famous address to his officers before the decisive Battle of Leuthen. In a poem written at that time he says:—

Death has to me grown so familiar
I face him now without a tremor.
His bony hand in mine does lie
Pressed with a tender gallantry,
And if at our next rendezvous
My throat he grips, without ado

I'll gasp politely, "Good, my friend!
You're always victor in the end
Since Adam's day. If death's my share
'Twill please the pious—and my heir!"

He retained the resilience of mind to send this poem to his friend Voltaire for perusal and contingent amendment. The King left his last victory in the Seven Years War to his brother Henry, as he had once left that of Kesselsdorff to old Dessau. Henry routed the Imperial forces at Freiberg, and Frederick wrote to him: "My dear Brother,—Your news of victory has taken years from my age. I was sixty yesterday—to-day I am eighteen." Whereupon the Prince remarked succinctly: "Then we had better conclude peace; for by such reckoning after another success Your Majesty would cease to be in the world at all."

(24)

The great King's sexual life has presented many knotty problems to those who are curious in such matters. Conjecture and base tittle-tattle notwithstanding, it may be taken as established that so virile a spirit was housed in an entirely virile personality. His letters to his sisters, with all of whom he was on excellent terms, his verses to Frau von Wreech, his epistles to Duchess Louisa Dorothea of Sax-Gotha, even the dispatches addressed between battles to his great enemy, Maria Theresa, all breathe a knightly spirit, and mirror a man who, with unusual civility and courtesy of address, united a sensitive understanding of the other and gentler sex.

Meanwhile a few scandal-mongers will continue to enjoy the occupation of nosing for indications that this remarkable man was given to unnatural vices. There has even been an attempt to put a foul interpretation upon the King's undeniable liking for the dancer Barberina, on whom, econo-

mical as he was, he lavished money, by the insinuation that he chanced to be attracted to her temporarily because her figure was masculine. The fact that Frederick abandoned, or at any rate no longer openly admitted, amorous adventures with women at a comparatively early age, should certainly not give cause for evil insinuations; for it should be remembered that at that time even so pronounced an amorist as Voltaire regarded himself as a veteran at forty-five, and writes of himself thereafter as a man for whom the joys of love can no longer be a solace.

(25)

There are few who have not at least some acquaintance with the delightful marginal notes that Frederick, who, after the Seven Years War, developed an ever-increasing talent both as writer and ruler, used to adorn the memorials and documents of all kinds that passed through his hands day by day. The restlessness and vain ambition of his youth had abated. "Work has become my whole life," he said of himself. A collection of these marginal notes would give a condensed *résumé* of the untiring activities by means of which, as the State's first servant, he attempted to make good the harm he had done as "a raving Roland"—his own mocking phrase for his own impetuous youth—in three costly wars. And, in spite of occasional follies in his way of life—he frequently ate far too freely of far too highly spiced dishes—his tough body served him well till his seventy-fourth year.

No ruler—not even Napoleon—has ever succeeded in imitating him effectively in the use of these marginalia, short, concise summaries, and decisions upon long questions or appeals. All Frederick's mother-wit, his readiness in repartee, his bitter sense of humour and his sound common sense went to the making of them. To read his remarks on his subjects' dogmatic disputes is alone enough to make one

long to press his Royal hand in friendly agreement. He did not need to issue any circumstantial edict of toleration like his forebears John Sigismund and the Great Elector; his ordinary, laconic decisions in questions of creed say enough for his tolerance, his share in the finest virtue of a century in which Voltaire could dedicate his *Mahomet* to the Pope. Frederick's principles in these matters are expressed in his own phrase: "In my dominions all religions are free, and in my country each man may find salvation in his own fashion." In our own times William II tried for a space to imitate his great predecessor's habit of making marginal glosses, and boldly adorned the documents set before him with the sparkling treasures of his wit. Bismarck consulted long with his son Herbert as to how best to wean the Imperial gentleman from a whim which was really unsuited to these prosaic days, more particularly as William II's confused opinions hardly bore comparison with Frederick the Great's invariable knack of hitting the nail upon the head. In the end Herbert Bismarck ventured to ask the Kaiser to refrain at least from annotating his father's Acts, arguing that while the Emperor's notes were, of course, brilliant and entertaining in the extreme, His Majesty lacked the leisure which had enabled his Royal ancestor to go so deeply into each document as to grasp all its bearings; that is, unless His Majesty were prepared to sit, like "*der alte Fritz*," for nineteen hours a day at his desk—a thing neither he nor his father would care to ask him to do.

(26)

The King, particularly at the beginning of his reign, evinced a notable preference for the nobility of his Realm—a preference which he seems to have bequeathed in various forms to his heirs and successors. His Hohenzollern ancestors, before they had become completely domesticated

in the Mark, had fought the native Junkerdom with a will, and it was with corresponding ardour that Frederick, the greatest of the line, wooed the aristocracy to himself and sought to link their fortunes for weal or woe with those of the reigning House. He admitted none but noblemen to his officers' corps, which at the same time he honoured with every possible privilege. It is a deplorable fact, and one that is widely known, that he gave every cornet precedence over any civilian official of whatever rank. "It is my will that my nobility shall flourish closely intertwined with the interests of the Throne, so that in them, above all things, we may place absolute reliance," said the Hohenzollern whose father had threatened the Junkers with the knout. Although the King succeeded, more especially by his system of army privileges, in chaining the aristocracy fast to the Throne and even in making many of them, at least, excellent managers of their own estates, he was far less successful in imbuing the Prussian noblemen with any wider intellectual culture. Apart from a few exceptional families such as the Kleistens and Bülowes, the majority showed a marked aversion for the Sciences and Fine Arts, and made up for the lack of these by an exaggerated arrogance of rank, or a strict and narrow orthodox piety.

Old Fritz, in the isolation of age seeing this more and more clearly, would sigh sometimes; by bringing the district of Netze under cultivation he had won a great territory for his country without a sword-stroke, but in the far more important matter of liberalizing his nobility by a higher culture and making them true sons of the Muses, statesmen and men of the world, he had, unhappily for the future of the State, entirely failed.

(27)

The days of the Philosopher of Sanssouci were numbered. For the last time he had himself driven during the hot

summer days to the new *Palais* that had been built by his orders on Dutch and English models. He had returned, however, weak and woebegone, to his favourite castle, there, like one of his own greyhounds, to creep into a corner and die. The faces he saw about him all betrayed a barely veiled impatience for his end. His old friends, such as Fouqué and Zietten, whom he had spoiled and pampered to the last, were now in their graves. He slept but little, and jested wearily that he would, at any rate, still make a good night-watchman! But he worked up to the very last, and regularly summoned his Cabinet Ministers at four or five o'clock in the morning. "My condition obliges me to put you to this trouble," he said, "but it will not last for long. My time draws to an end. I must use the hours I have left, for they belong not to me but to the State."

On the day before his last he opened a bottle of wine a hundred years old hoping it would keep up his strength; but he was past the enjoyment of it. Like his friend Voltaire he had lost his taste for drinking as early as his taste for love-making. "Such old vintages as you and I are no longer appreciated," he brooded over his glass. Thereupon he ordered a copy of his sealed last will and testament to be brought in, but in reading he did not get much beyond the first few sentences. "Life leads us with rapid strides from birth to death. In this short span of time it is man's destiny to work for the community of which he is a member." Shortness of breath then compelled him to lay the paper aside. Once more, for the last time, they wheeled him out on the castle terrace overlooking the park he loved: how he had disputed with Knobelsdorff when they were laying it out! He gazed with his dim eyes at the stone statue of Flora, under which, by an express clause of his will, he desired to be buried; beside his dead greyhounds Biche, Alkeme, and Arsinoe, whom during life he had always addressed as "*Sie*."

Suddenly he thought he heard a horse neigh behind his

back. "That must be my good old Condé," he said. It was the name he had given his faithful old white horse, just as he had christened his blood-horses by such great names as Cæsar, Brühl, Choiseul, Pitt, Kaunitz, and Lord Bute; though he had not addressed them as "*Sie*"—it had been "*du*" to the horses. He cleared his throat a little when he realized that his ears had deceived him. Perhaps it was the Death Horse already whinnying at his shoulder? His musical voice, that siren voice celebrated by Voltaire, had grown dull and toneless; his front teeth were gone and he could only hiss now like an old snake. Like his grandmother Sophia Charlotte, he had been passionately addicted to snuff, but had been obliged to give it up long ago as it increased the feeling of constriction in his chest. He feebly beckoned to his attendant to wheel him back into the castle. "*La montagne est passée, nous irons mieux,*" were his last intelligible words; and so, we are told, in the arms of the Hussar on guard, who lifted him up at death's approach, he passed peacefully enough and closed his blazing blue eyes for ever. The last words of his will run: "Until my last breath my desires shall centre in the happiness of the State. May it ever be governed with justice, wisdom, and strength! May it rejoice in the mildest of laws! May its finances be the best administered! May it be ever bravely defended by an army that aspires to naught save honour and noble military glory! May it flourish to the end of time!"

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The fairest memorial Frederick left of himself is, after all, the windmill behind Sanssouci. Better than the somewhat too ornate and fussy monument by Rauch in Unter den Linden, unveiled in 1851 with all the military pomp of Prussia, this unpretentious little mill bears witness to the great ruler's heroism, even in small matters. He tried to

purchase it from the miller because the clatter of its sails was a constant disturbance to him when at work, but when he failed he did not attempt to dispute or influence the decision of the courts. "My poet's nerves are having a hard fight of it with my sense of justice," he said one day, when the noise was particularly clamorous, "but I hope the love of justice will gain the victory over my susceptibilities."

It did. The mill remained where we see it to-day, and still the old sails, which can no longer turn and disturb a king at his papers, seem a little to overbear Knobelsdorff's elegant, one-storied mansion. The antiquated mill passed long since into the possession of the Prussian Crown. It was offered for sale to the great Fritz's successor, but that fat monarch had the scantiest interest in Sanssouci, his godless forebear's residence for so many years, and he left the mill to be a mill and to go on turning its creaky sails; he never stayed there, and so they did not trouble him. It was under his son, Frederick William III, that the Hohenzollerns acquired the mill by purchase. That prosaic ruler would have had it pulled down at once as an inconvenient encumbrance of his great-uncle's venerable castle, but the romantic Crown Prince, later Frederick William IV, begged him to let the old mill stand—it was quiet enough now and everyone was used to it—for sentiment's sake. The King growled a little, but let him have his way. Thus the mill of Sanssouci remained as a touching memorial of the good old days of innocence in Prussia, when the just claims of a petty burgher were stronger than the will of a mighty king!

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When Mirabeau, who was in Berlin on a secret embassy at the time of Frederick's death, learned that the great King was not to be buried near his beloved palace in the

grave he had himself prepared years before, he pressed urgently for an audience with the new monarch. In his passionate reverence for the express will of a man, especially of so great a man, the fiery southerner simply could not support the thought that, against the clearly and frequently made dispositions of the dead, they should proceed to bury the body of a freethinker in a church. Prince Henry had warned him from the first that his protest would have little chance with his Royal and pious nephew, and indeed the very sight of the throngs of clergy in the new ruler's anti-chambers robbed Mirabeau of his last hope of achieving anything by his petition.

Thus it came to pass that fat Frederick William II, the happy heir, in opposition to the great King's testamentary dispositions, buried the dead man in one of the dullest churches in Potsdam, side by side with the father whom, whatever his later filial respect, he had undeniably avoided on all possible occasions while both were alive, and, what is more, beneath a pulpit where, Sunday by Sunday, sermons were preached such as Frederick living had shunned in dislike and incredulity, and which Frederick dead must now attend beyond hope of escape.

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The one physical relic which the great King's successors were unable to dishonour or destroy was the last tragic aspect of the dead countenance, the death-mask. Eight weeks before his death the old King wrote to his Court sculptor, who had carved a statue of his friend Keith: "As to the next commission, set your mind at rest and have patience. As soon as I feel that the time is ripe I will give you another piece of sculpture to do." That commission was the preparation of his death-mask. The artist took it from the *castrum doloris*, the dead monarch's bed of suffering, the greatest death-mask of mortal man extant.

So we possess it to-day. Like the head of a hawk or some other noble bird of prey, the long, narrow, wasted, pointed skull, with vaulted forehead, arched nose, delicately chiselled temples, and firmly compressed, sorrowful lips, seems to be lifted beyond earthly limits and confines into those highest heavenly regions attainable by man, which we love to conceive as a happier, more peaceful, and nobler world than ours.

FREDERICK WILLIAM II

(1744-1797)

SELDOM has the death of any Prince been so ardently desired as that of Frederick the Great, the strongest of the Hohenzollerns and the best of the Kings of Prussia; it may strike one as both strange and horrible, but it was the fact. This nation-maker, this unique personality, had, in the estimation of almost every soul in his own country and in the world outside, lived too long. "That powerful beast will outlast us, one and all," wrote Maria Theresa, herself destined to live five years fewer than he, and to go to her grave in the Church of the Capuchins six years before his death. The great King's successor, his brother Augustus William's son, like all heirs to a throne, waited for his uncle's decease more impatiently than anyone. "The old man must have made a pact with the Devil not to fetch him away," the Prince would sometimes say to his intimates as the longing for power gradually grew upon him, while Frederick, though past his seventieth year, continued to contemplate death as a philosopher, but not, apparently, as a king. Above all, the women who flocked about the new ruler were wild with impatience for the despot's death. Wilhelmina Enke, daughter of a Potsdam musician, the longest established and best-beloved of Frederick William's mistresses—she subsequently married Rietz, a Groom of the Chambers, for the sake of appearances, and was honoured by the King with the title of Countess Lichtenau—wrote at that time to her mother: "The old vulture is at his last gasp. The physicians have assured the Crown Prince he can't last more than three weeks at most, and then *we* shall be on top. We'll have out those bags of gold from the cellars of old Berlin Castle—everything will be at

our orders then." When the happy event had actually occurred she continued: "That was a long three weeks! I counted the hours till the longed-for news of death arrived. And now at last to-night, between two and three o'clock, the old curmudgeon breathed his last and the Prince is King. Just think, mother, my Prince is King! Minchin will be mistress now, a new life is beginning for us. I shall buy a house in Unter den Linden and have it all newly furnished. I won't be one bit less well served than the Queen."

Could anything characterize Frederick the Great's successor more vividly and succinctly than these effusions of his mistress, the one human being perhaps whom he really loved? In his personality and his rule he was almost the complete contrary of his predecessor; it might seem that the Muse of history enjoyed the joke of turning Frederick the Great's whole procedure topsy-turvy. Frederick William II was as pronounced a Don Juan as his uncle had been a mysogynist, as extravagant as Frederick had been parsimonious, as pious and superstitious as Fritz had been freethinking and clear-headed, as easy-going and good-natured as the other had been hard-working and bad-tempered. Two things only the pair had in common—a liking for music (though Frederick, it is true, lost this somewhat in his last toothless years), and the true Hohenzollern love of the war game. On one single occasion, during the War of the Bavarian Succession, a totally superfluous war against which Frederick William and Prince Henry had both vainly advised Frederick, the Crown Prince won his uncle's whole-hearted approval by winning a battle against the Austrians and afterwards skilfully extricating his troops from Bohemia. "*Der alte Fritz*" had then ridden up to him and embraced him before the whole army, congratulating him with the words: "From to-day I regard you no longer as my nephew, but as my son. You have done all that I could have done—all that could have

been expected of the most experienced general." The Prince must have recalled with a shudder another scene, often recounted in his family, a scene between the King and his unfortunate father during the Seven Years War after the latter, as was alleged at least, had badly mismanaged a retreat, and from the moral effects of which he died. Frederick had abused and harangued him before the assembled officers like a naughty schoolboy; a few old generals even murmured, despite themselves, at the cruel harshness of the punishment. That scolding had broken Prince Augustus William; from being his great brother's admirer he became his mortal enemy, and in an apologia entitled, "An Account of the Campaign of 1757," which he wrote to clear himself, there was much malicious criticism of Frederick's generalship. Frederick the Great ordered the love of soldiering to be well drilled into his nephew (whose father died when he was fourteen years of age) as "the most suitable calling for a nobleman." "He need have no great respect for the minister who instructs him in religion," continued the great King's directions, but upon the whole, in contrast to his father, he took little personal interest in the education of the heir-apparent. It cannot, however, be said that Frederick William II carried his love of militarism to excess. Every year in May he held a grand review in Berlin; he liked to go regularly on tours of inspection round his principal garrisons, and he increased the strength of the Prussian Army, particularly in cavalry. At the same time he preferred to keep out of wars, and spared his Army bloodshed as far as might be.

It is, then, all the more remarkable that he, without a sword-stroke, should have added, with Ansbach, Bayreuth, and his later acquisitions at the second and third partitions of Poland, a much larger tract to his domains than did Frederick the Great with all his battles. And although eventually the Treaty of Basle with the young French

Republic, for which he has been so frequently criticized, deprived him of all his possessions on the left bank of the Rhine, Prussia, at his death, was far more extensive than under any of his forebears. Even his powerful grandson William I, whom he himself held over the font in baptism, brought less territory to Prussia than the peace-loving Frederick William II.

Notwithstanding his very real love of music—he was as good a 'cellist as his Royal uncle had, in his youth, been a flautist—Frederick William, who, for all his giant stature, early began to put on flesh, showed a quite unmistakable taste for the low and the vulgar. It appears, for instance, in his long amour with “the Rietz” and his boon-companionship with her husband, his Groom of the Chambers, a tipsy, grasping, vulgar fellow, to whom the monarch, however, administered many a drubbing when his usual placid good-humour gave place to one of his rare fits of frenzied rage. This King undoubtedly shared a natural understanding of, and sympathy with, the “lower orders,” with his great-great-nephew, the poet Wildenbruch, whose most vital work, *Die Haubenlerche*, shows that he had studied the Berlin populace to some purpose.

The King had this “pack,” as his son always called them, constantly about him till his death, and it was with real self-sacrifice that “the Rietz” and her “dear Rietz-kin” undertook the care of the sick colossus during his last years of illness. Under their tendance he died at the age of fifty-five, while his wife sat apart in her marble palace and his son, to distract his mind, amused himself with his beloved theatre. Frederick William’s enthusiasm for music and his predilection for the atmosphere of the lower servants’ hall, taken in conjunction with a fleeting visit to Castle Brühl on the Rhine, where Beethoven’s mother had a temporary engagement as washerwoman, even gave rise to a rumour that he was the parent of this wonder of the musical world—an absurd piece of gossip



MEETING OF KING WILLIAM II (right) WITH THE EMPEROR LEOPOLD II, PILLNITZ 1891

to which Beethoven himself scarcely thought it necessary to reply. The King had, however, a number of illegitimate children, among them a son and daughter by "the Rietz," whom he acknowledged, and upon whom he conferred the titles of Count and Countess von der Mark, whereas he refused to acknowledge a subsequent son by her, and "Chamberlain Rietz" had to accept the paternity. Excessively amorous in youth, he appears to have aged early sexually, and "the Rietz," in the memoirs she subsequently published in self-justification, says that from a certain date physical intercourse with him ceased; the facts were written in his face; the mouth with the full, curved upper lip, so full of sensuality in youth, withered in middle-age into the lacrymose, the parsonic.

Despite his many amours, the fat prince was a kindly enough fellow at heart. At his accession his amiability, his friendly bearing to every man, and still more to every woman, won all hearts. Frederick the Great had become increasingly morose, suspicious, and misanthropic as he grew older; in Frederick William II the country welcomed a new ruler who was open and friendly, and had a good word for everyone, high or low. Even the neglected and dusty widow of "*der alte Fritz*" was brought out of her solitude, like some piece of family furniture from its dark corner. She was nearly related to Frederick William's mother, a little princess of Brunswick with whom his father had been forced to contract a marriage of convenience at his great brother's express command; it almost seems as if the great King had wanted to be revenged on his younger brother for the hated marriage with which their father had punished him.

Frederick William II, the first fruit of this enforced union, showed at times a trace of chivalry in his nature. When his Rietz doubted her youthful lover's constancy, he pierced the palm of his left hand and wrote on paper in his own blood: "By my word of honour as a Prince I swear

to you that I will never leave you.—Fr.W.” He was always kind and courteous to his second wife, a Princess of Hesse-Darmstadt (he had divorced the first for infidelity), even though as husband and sovereign he made the wildest demands upon her sufferance by contracting on two occasions bigamous marriages, solemnly, in the church, and with the assent of the ecclesiastical courts! The first of these two secondary “wives” was a pretty lady-in-waiting, Julie von Voss, whom he created Countess Ingenheim, and who died upon the birth of a child; the second was an equally beautiful lady of the Court, a Countess Dönhoff, from whom he soon separated, however, on account of her high-handed ways and her perpetual interference in matters of State. By her he had two children, later created Count and Countess of Brandenburg. The very openness and naturalness with which Frederick William entered upon these bigamous alliances, actually claiming the approbation and blessing of the obsequious Protestant clergy, has something almost prepossessing about it, though, naturally enough, the absurd proceedings bitterly offended his wife, a temperamentally excitable and jealous woman in any case. His permanent mistress, Madame Rietz, bore the matter more patiently, and regarded her monarch’s two marriages as mere passing aberrations. “When he has had his fill of these tedious, stiff, stuck-up Court ladies,” she would say, consoling her “*Rietz-kin*,” who was full of sordid apprehensions of a diminution of the Royal bounty, “he will soon come back to us! You see, he feels more at his ease in our society, he can let himself go with us.” Easy and unconventional as he was, the tall King, like Louis XIV and Louis XV, always preserved a certain dignity; kindly as he was, he insisted on being master where women were concerned, and would never tolerate feminine interference in matters of State. The most remarkable feature of his extra-matrimonial adventures was the fact of his getting

the church to cloak them and legitimize them—a thing rendered impossible, by Catholic canon law, to either of the monarchs mentioned above. The highest authorities of Prussia's Consistory Court referred the King to the example of their founder, Martin Luther, who, under quite different circumstances it is true, had allowed his friend, the Landgrave of Hesse, to possess two wives. For the rest he accepted the championship of a number of wily advocates, who wrote about the "natural right" of a man to a number of wives. He was not, however, without feeling. At times, loud though he was, he even showed a trace of that "sensibility" which characterized the many great minds of his era; as, for instance, when he built "the Rietz," a country house in the form of a ruined Roman villa, in emulation of the Du Barry's *bergerie* and Marie Antionette's Trianon.

To his Ministers he showed the same kind of loyalty as to his servants and mistresses. He retained Count Hertzberg after Frederick's death as his principal adviser, and it was only the Count's persistent Austrophobia, which, like all hatred and bitterness, was extremely distasteful to him, that eventually induced him to deprive him, as gently as possible, of his office. Moreover, since he was his great predecessor's opposite in every respect, his foreign policy cultivated friendship with Germany and the Empire. The plan, cherished for a time by "*der alte Fritz*," of inciting the Turks against Austria, seemed to his successor both insane and wicked. Again, unlike Frederick the Great, he was proudly conscious of his German blood. "This king intends to abase himself to the level of the German nation," mocked Mirabeau in Paris. But to the aged poet Gleim, at whom Frederick had been pleased to sneer, Frederick William wrote: "You have addressed me on behalf of the German Muse with true German frankness, and you may encourage her with the assurance that I shall be delighted to be her protector," On all occasions he stressed the fact

that he was indeed a German prince. After Hertzberg's retirement Wöllner and Bischoffwerder became his chief advisers. Wöllner, formerly a pastor, and a Court tutor until Frederick the Great dismissed him for "a treacherous, intriguing parson," was chiefly responsible as Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs under Frederic William II for the notorious "Edict on Religion," issued a few days after he took office. In this Edict the clergy were forbidden to depart in any degree whatsoever, either in speech or writing, from the "documents of revelation," that is to say, primarily, the Bible, under pain of deprivation. This piece of tyranny was shortly followed by a second ukase, the "Edict of Censure," and finally, as forerunner to the Inquisition Courts of the 'forty-eight, an "Ecclesiastical Commission of Direct Inquiry" was set up. The aged Kant, who under Frederick the Great had been free to dethrone the good God Himself, was now to feel the effects of these severe decrees even in distant Königsberg. A Cabinet order was issued against him from Berlin, beginning "Our Royal Majesty has observed with great displeasure that you have misused your philosophy to misrepresent and disparage many fundamental doctrines of Holy Scripture and of Christianity. We require you, on your conscience, to make answer for this, failing which, and in case of continued obduracy, you may expect proceedings to be taken against you." The septuagenarian Kant took the course that Galileo had taken before him, and yielded to the extent of making the following promise: "I hereby most solemnly declare, as Your Majesty's most dutiful servant, that I will henceforth abstain from all public discussion, whether in speech or writing, touching religion, whether natural or revealed." This show of weakness, by means of which he avoided a pointless martyrdom, the aged philosopher justified to himself in words inscribed on a memorandum of his literary remains: "It is baseness in a man to retract or disavow his inner convictions,

but silence, in a case like the present, is the duty of a subject; and though everything that a man speaks must be truth, it is not also a duty to speak all the truth publicly."

Nothing has so lowered Frederick William in the estimation of his people as the promulgation of this medieval edict, intruding so incongruously upon an era of enlightenment. He either could not see, or, in his Royal omnipotence, refused to see, the sheer absurdity of these narrow-minded, retrograde, bigoted ordinances as coming from a man who, like himself, had swept aside all considerations of domestic and family morality. It may be, of course, that the exiguous mantle of severe moral rectitude he thus sought to wrap about his person and government was designed to hide the unpleasing spectacle presented by his own domestic life. His relations with his wife and legitimate son were certainly no better than had been those of the great Fritz with his unhappy consort and with himself as heir-apparent, which latter relations, during later years, had been restricted to written commands addressed by the uncle to the nephew. And now, with a like indifference, Frederick William's proud wife and gloomy son sullenly left him to the slovenly society of his mistress's household.

After Wöllner, General von Bischoffwerder exercised the strongest influence on the weak mentality of the King, and that despite the fact that the coquettish, though elderly, Madame Rietz could not endure the clownish, pious fellow. By conjuring up ghosts and other supernatural apparitions Bischoffwerder obtained a strong hold upon the superstitious monarch, and slipped into the wily Hertzberg's office as Minister for Foreign Affairs. The General knew remarkably little of the art of war, but he was a member of the secret society of Rosicrucians, and, with the assistance of his dominating Catholic wife and his two sisters-in-law (who shared in his affections with his

lawful spouse, after the Royal example), he practised all kinds of extravagant nonsense, the muddle-headed King, with his craving for revelations and prophecies, being an enraptured participant. "Ormosus" was Frederick William's dark and secret name among the Rosicrucians, who have all kinds of links with the ancient cults and philosophies of Egypt and Persia.

Bischoffwerder, in complete accord with the King, was also responsible for the *rapprochement* between Prussia and Austria, a change of policy which made nonsense of all Frederick the Great's wars and the whole course of his statesmanship. A strong emotional sense of his Royal kinship with other princes, which Frederick William II unfortunately bequeathed to his grandchildren, more particularly to his great-great-grandson William II, induced him, as Austria's vassal, to take part in a coalition war against the young French Republic in support of his Royal cousin, Louis XVI of France. He gave the supreme command of his armies on this occasion to his cousin, Duke Charles William Ferdinand of Brunswick, with whose wild and provocative manifesto against the Revolution the King's own circumscribed mentality was in hearty agreement. He had listened to all sorts of dark sayings about a new Supernatural Power, with its seat in Paris, from whose womb should proceed the new Ruler of the Kingdoms of the World, the Antichrist, to be followed by the Second Coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the Last Judgment. It was to crush this Evil Power at its birth that the usually peaceable Frederick William II made up his mind to enter into a league with Austria and into the war which, as is well known, came to a standstill at Valmy, and subsequently ended as far as Prussia was concerned with the rather inglorious Treaty of Basle.

Sensualist as he was, and given to extravagances of all kinds, the King was not actually lazy. To his dear Rietz's amazement he began immediately after Frederick's death

to take a serious part in the affairs of government. "What a misfortune!" she wailed. "My little Prince works all day long now that he is King. He has scarcely time for me. I am inconsolable!" In fact, he did his day's work industriously to the end, and proved a by no means incompetent ruler. His ineradicable animosity to the Jews was probably merely a consequence of the sudden and forcible assimilation of Poland, where the race was, for those days, really embarrassingly numerous. Hardenberg, whom he discovered, said of him that "if this Prince had left us nothing but our good highways and the common law of Prussia, his reign would have been sufficiently meritorious." He possessed a certain worldly-wisdom, a wisdom which caused him to break off the war with France when he saw that supports did not arrive and that there was nothing to be hoped from further battles. The very fact that he mixed with people of a low type like "the Rietz" and her spouse gave him, as later it gave Edward VII of England, a very adequate equipment of slyness, circumspection, and selfishness. Despite his German blood, he would rather sacrifice some piece of the German Empire that did not belong to him than injure himself or his own country. "I cannot completely sacrifice myself and involve my own country in total ruin to take part in some distant campaign, the results of which cannot but be inferior to those of the present Peace Treaty," he said, and brought the unlucky western campaign, so admirably described by Goethe, to an abrupt end.

Subsequent events in France, the execution of the King and Queen, which he saw with horror, shook him profoundly, and drove him to ever more frenzied excesses of exterior piety, but did not, for all that, stir him to any further military enterprises against that land of Satan and regicide on the other side of the Rhine.

Prematurely aged and decrepit, he died in the marble palace at Potsdam after prolonged death agonies. Neither

his relatives nor any of the clergy for whose caste the King had always done so much attended his last moments. It happened that even the good-natured, though somewhat slatternly, Madame Rietz had gone to lie down for a little to sleep off the exhaustion attendant on nursing the corpulent invalid. "Do not you leave me too," said the King to a valet who stood by him, stretching out a beseeching hand—" *Ne m'abandonnez pas, mon cher Offel.*" For, his German sentiments notwithstanding, he, like his great uncle, all his life spoke French better than his own mother tongue.

His son gave orders that all the King's papers should be burned at once, particularly all correspondence. The body of Frederick William II was carried to Berlin, where it lay in state for four-and-twenty days in the Royal Stables in the Breitenstrasse, and, despite the wintry cold, began to stink so that the horses in the riding-school took fright and lost condition. On being informed by the equerry of this annoyance, Frederick William III, who till then had apparently forgotten all about his Royal father, resolved to have the corpse interred in Berlin Cathedral. The King had asked that there should be no pageantry at his burial, but his last commands were disregarded, even as he himself had disregarded his great predecessor's wish to be buried beside his dead greyhounds. His funeral took place nearly a month after his death, and as magnificently as possible to atone for the delay. The chancel was removed from the Cathedral, and in its place an enormous twenty-three-foot pyramid erected, upon which, by order of Frederick William III, the fortunate heir, was inscribed in letters of gold: "Frederick William II, the Father of the Fatherland in Magnanimity, Mercy, and Justice, Passed Cheerfully from the Midst of his Loyal People, through the Night of Death into the Sunlight of Immortality, the 16th of November, 1797."

When Frederick the Great, seated among the immortals,

heard of the inscription upon his nephew's grave, he sneered: "My successor, my dissolute nephew, could have no better clearance than this totally inappropriate epitaph; it well suits the debauchee, whose whole way of life and government were like a parody on mine."

FREDERICK WILLIAM III

(1770-1840)

A GOOD-NATURED, stupid "*pantoufle*," Napoleon was wont to call this ruler, pronouncing the word "*pantoufle*" after the fashion of his native island as "*pantuff'l*." That is, until 1805. Afterwards, when Prussia's petty monarch actually presumed to oppose *him*, Emperor by the Grace of Napoleon, and, carried away by the enthusiasm of the war party at Court if not entirely by his own initiative, brought Prussia's long-established peace policy to an end, the Corsican's sentiments towards "*der alte Fritz's*" feeble great-nephew became exacerbated to the point of bitterest personal enmity. "How could you *dare* to take up arms against me, *me* who have settled with the two Emperors of Russia and Austria?" he rasped at Frederick William; and that King, whose nerves were of the thinnest, shrank back appalled by these violent tones so close to his ear. Indeed, at one time they almost came to blows in Tilsit, where they had met to discuss the future of Frederick the Great's totally defeated dominions; they shouted so loud at each other that the Czar Alexander hurried out of an adjoining room to part them, and found the King dark red, and Napoleon green, with rage. "Very well!" hissed the Corsican, amidst the Czar's attempts at peace-making, "I *am* angry, I *am* revengeful, I never forgive personal insults—on principle!" Napoleon frankly hated the faithless Frederick William, whose secret enmity he could feel, even though at every meeting with the "*aventurier*," as he was wont to call him in private talk with Louise, he was careful to wear the Cross of the Legion of Honour with which Napoleon had decorated him—the "*Legion of Hell*" as it was in his eyes. Napoleon, however, saw clean through the compliant

exterior which Frederick William presented to him, and, indeed, had a clairvoyant realization of the danger to his Empire represented by that Prince and his people. Beardless himself, he felt actual physical repulsion to his enemy, for when at Tilsit, the King, whose last hope was in Russia, adopted Russian ways out of compliment to Alexander and grew a little Cossack moustache. Napoleon even went so far in his dislike of the King of Prussia as to behave like a ruffian to his consort, Queen Louise. At a last conference held on the Russian frontier, when she advanced a final plea for Magdeburg, the upstart, quite against his usual courtesy with ladies, snarled at her like a tinker, "And so you are trying to get something more out of me at the last moment?" And when Frederick William, in despair at the heavy losses involved for him in the Peace of Tilsit, cried, "Sire, you leave me hardly a remnant of my dominions," Napoleon, who as heir of the Revolution liked occasionally to stand for the common people's cause, said, with his most satanic smile, "What would you? You took far more from the Countess Lichtenau—flatly, you treated her *en canaille*."

These words were an allusion to a fact which was common knowledge—that Frederick William III, when the breath was hardly out of his libertine father's body, took discreditable proceedings against the old man's long-established mistress, the Countess Lichtenau, formerly Minchin Rietz. Before her Royal protector's corpse was cold the lady was roughly thrust into prison by the new ruler, although there was nothing at all against her except that on countless occasions she had made her fat monarch happy. Frederick William III, however, was determined to be revenged on her for all the misery she had caused his embittered mother. She was tried, not before a regular court as she demanded to be, but before a specially appointed commission of King's toadies—and even they,

do what they would, could not convict the forty-five-year-old ex-mistress of any crime. None the less, the King announced that it was his Royal will that she should immediately disburse all the properties his father had given her, including her two houses in Berlin and Charlottenburg, and the five-hundred-thousand talers the late monarch had made over to her to secure her future, upon the ground that she had extracted all these from his deceased Majesty by undue pressure. Finally, when the woman who had nursed his father on his deathbed had suffered imprisonment for three months, and had spent four years under police supervision in Glogau, Frederick William, having extracted a strict pledge of silence, permitted himself to throw her a yearly pension of four thousand talers by way of special grace. Napoleon took a malicious pleasure in championing "the old girl's" cause against the ruling Hohenzollern, constituted himself poor man's advocate, and inserted a clause in the Peace of Tilsit to the effect that the Countess Lichtenau should have her estates returned to her—an act that so touched the one-time Rietz's heart that she paid him a visit of thanks in Paris.

A lurking duplicity that made his promises unreliable was the worst characteristic of the otherwise estimable and chivalrous King Frederick William III. But this very quality of guile, from which one could never feel secure, poisoned intercourse with him for all honest and straightforward people. Baron von Stein, his ablest Minister of State, whom Frederick William blandly dropped and whose ripe, well-weighed advice, even on economic questions, he later preferred to do without, was flatly disgusted by his King's deceitfulness, though unfortunately his sense of his duty as a subject prevented him from writing his reminiscences during his long years of retirement in his castle at Nassau. Even the silken-smooth Hardenberg—"Halbenberg" as he was nicknamed by Stein on account of his everlasting compromises—whom the King preferred,

if only for his mournful and lacrymose bearing, to the brusque, upstanding, and countrified gentleman Stein, complained of the unreliability of the ruler at whose side he worked as Prime Minister for a decade. It was a real grief to Hardenberg that after the Congress of Vienna, when the common people had succeeded in pulling the chestnuts out of the fire, and the honour and stability of the dynasty of Hohenzollern had been re-established, the King showed no intention whatever of introducing the measure of popular representation he had solemnly promised. That Frederick William III broke his vow to the subjects who had suffered and bled for him is, indeed, far the worst instance of his faithlessness. He took refuge behind all kinds of excuses, such as that the "necessities of the time" demanded the strong autocratic hand of the country's ruler, a patriarchal relationship between king and people, etc., and by so doing definitely chose his side in the spiritual war that Metternich (whom he called friend) was waging by the methods of the inquisitor and persecutor against all those ideas of the people's rights to emancipation and self-government which were then spreading from revolutionary France. The King had always found plenty of excuses of a kind to justify his duplicity and obstinacy. From the beginning of his reign he had taken a firm stand on the principle of personal Government, but as he soon saw he was not alert enough to attend to everything as the great Fritz had done, he worked through "Cabinet Councillors" as the "*Geheimräte*" (Privy Councilors) were then called. These he drew from the Junker, that is to say the flunkey, caste. Men of a type which under Frederick the Great had simply provided clerks to carry out his orders now suddenly became persons of high importance as the King's personal advisers. It was in vain that Stein raged vehemently against these men of straw who surrounded the King, arguing and talking wise folly, meddling in the Government, yet without personal respon-

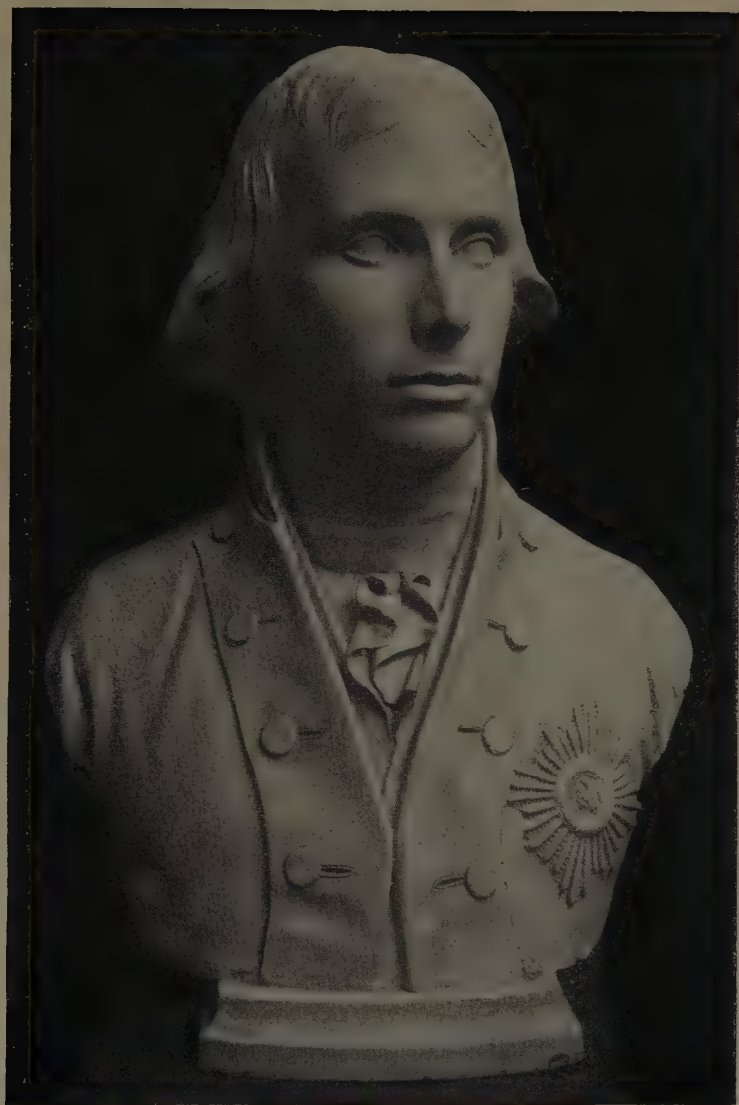
sibility. The first condition Stein made when he gathered up the frayed reins of Government after Prussia's great collapse, was that he must be able to deal with His Majesty direct, and without the intervention of a pack of subordinate clerks. In particular he would not tolerate Beyme, who was for ever explaining to him—the German patriot—the advantages of Roman law, as a permanent third party between him and the King. In addition to this dry-as-dust jurist and Paul Pry whom Stein succeeded in ousting from his post as Minister for Foreign Affairs and fobbing off with that of President of the Supreme Court in Berlin, Frederick William greatly favoured a certain Adjutant-General von Köckritz, in Stein's opinion the most tedious of men. The King, however, listened to and followed the advice of this blockhead as if he were the Pythian oracle. The King was ready to entertain the most crack-brained ideas if only they came from this reactionary adviser. "If that dullard Köckritz were to advise him to equip the army with medieval fire-arms, he would without a doubt consider at great length if, and how, the proposal could be carried out," jested the fiery Prince Louis Ferdinand, who found the King's slowness and deliberation quite insufferable. The ruler who occupied the Prussian throne during the period of the most powerful popular movements of the last century, initially regarded all progress with suspicion and dislike. This applied even to the question of new railroads, against the introduction of which he stood out for a long time on the most absurd and antiquated grounds. "Conserve, assuage, appease," were his three favourite words, and he constantly employed them as brakes upon the wheels of the car of State. The Carlsbad Resolutions—concerted agreements arrived at at Metternich's instigation, designed to support absolute monarchy and to bridle every movement towards freedom—met with Frederick William's whole-hearted approval. A "Central Commission of Inquiry for the Detection of Popular Revolutionary

Activities" proceeded, under his personal patronage, scarcely less unjustly, savagely, and foolishly than the Inquisitorial Courts for the suppression of heresy had done in the past. Entirely irreproachable persons were laid by the heels, as, for instance, that worthy old patriot Jahn, who had done his very utmost towards making the youth of Prussia capable of sustaining the struggle against Napoleon and in support of the Hohenzollerns. True German patriots and friends of the Fatherland like Schleiermacher and Arndt were persecuted and deprived of their offices, while guileless poets such as Fritz Reuter were unjustly cast into prison. Every member of a *Burschenschaft* (Students' Associations formed about 1815 for political purposes) was regarded as an enemy of his country, with the result that many of the clearest thinkers in Prussia were forced to emigrate to America; there are said to have been a hundred and fifty thousand such exiles.

During these years, no doubt, the King showed a streak of the fanatic, the Spaniard, the persecutor, and, indeed, all his life he carried a legacy of moroseness from his mother. His mother, to whom any lightness or jocularly were by nature almost entirely foreign, had been totally embittered early in life by the public insults her portly husband, Frederick William II, had put upon her. Her perpetual grievances, her distress over the shameless women of her husband's Court, cast a still deeper shadow over the Crown Prince, who was a cheerless lad in any case; and a peevish, pessimistic tutor contributed still further towards loading the boy's heavy temperament with lead. Later the widowed Queen Mother was perpetually and anxiously on her guard that Court etiquette should be observed towards her—a dry and dusty legacy which she likewise bequeathed to her son in the form of a tendency to pedantry and stiff formality.

From his deceased father Frederick William III seems to have inherited nothing but a certain irresolution in affairs

of State and an acute dislike of war. "It is easier to wind one's way through" was the unsteady principle upon which, like his plump parent, he based his foreign policy. These serpentine proceedings, resembling those by which George William of Brandenburg had "wound his way" through the Thirty Years War, were continued by the King until his position became inextricable. He was then forced to enter the war against Napoleon alone, having unluckily missed a chance of attacking the Emperor a year previously in company with Russia and Austria, when the "Unconquerable" might probably enough have met his Leipzig at Austerlitz. It was very much against his will that he was at last persuaded in 1813 to engage in his final military argument with his mortal enemy, the Emperor of the French; and then chiefly through Yorck's action, though this man's independent step towards the freeing of Prussia from Napoleon, the Convention of Tauroggen, was at first repudiated by the King as an arbitrary and presumptuous private act. For "Subjects are but objects; they must not act independently." The truth is that he was forced into the War of Liberation by the upward surge of an entire people—a thing which he failed utterly to understand, and in which he had no real belief. When he heard in Breslau that thousands were volunteering for the war against the foreign tyrant, he would not for a long time admit it for a fact. There were times when he appeared to be utterly unable to grasp realities, and, as eye-witnesses tell us, seemed even to himself to be merely an actor in a play—a point in which William II bore a certain resemblance to him. Frederick William's indifference and apathy after Prussia's collapse amazed all observers. He spoke of these unfortunate events as if they were part of someone else's story—not of his own. He responded to Scharnhorst's and Gneisenau's energy and resolution with a sceptical shrug of the shoulders. The military pedant Köckritz's former place as chief adviser was now occupied by the lukewarm,



KING FREDERICK WILLIAM III, 1799
Bust by Johann Gottfried Schadow

greasy Knesebeck, a cautious place-hunter and intriguer who later tried to oust the national hero, Blücher. For a long time the King would not hear mention of Yorck and his bold, independent, "so entirely Prussian act," as the undecided Knesebeck called Yorck's courageous Convention of Tauroggen and juncture with the Russians, and even in after years he could never get on with the headstrong, ambitious man, who all his life long coveted Blücher's more abundant laurels. The "Appeal to My People," of which Privy Councillor Hippel, nephew of the comic writer, was the æsthetic author—a document in which for the very first time in the history of Prussia the wearer of the crown turned to the people with an account of the causes of an imminent war—was not at all to the taste of the gloomy autocrat. "Must think it over—cannot decide yet," he muttered for daysogether, till at last the pressing necessity of the time compelled him to give his signature and formal consent to that inspiring exhortation. It may be noted in passing that in an era of richest development in our language and literature this Hohenzollern Prince, like his predecessors, wrote French better than German. His abrupt manner of speech, the "telegraphic style," as we should now call it, in which he stammered out his government of Prussia for three-and-forty years, was a legacy from his father, who would murmur sweet nothings and converse at length with ladies, but otherwise preferred to confine himself to mere jerky words of command. "*Versorgen!*" ("Look after it!"), the old fellow had bellowed at his Court attendants one evening, when, in a touching little scene, one of his mistresses, the Countess Dönhoff, had laid her new-born daughter at its father's feet. Unfortunately the awkward, and, to all appearances, mentally deficient, style of speech employed by Frederick William III, who would say to his suite, "Remind me of it!", "Put it right!", "Submit at convenience!", "Take into consideration!", "Proceed regardless!", and little else, was imitated in the

country, particularly by the army officers, who at one period, as old Blücher bitingly remarked, "bleated like a flock of imbeciles in infinitives only."

To be niggardly of words was at that time, in military Prussia and elsewhere, a fair passport to success. It was accordingly an assistance to the personally somewhat weak and helpless ruler to cover up his lack of self-confidence by terseness of expression. He soon saw that a Prince who says little, and that little severely and abruptly, enjoys greater respect from his associates and subjects than one who appears frank and sociable. "Your husband is too short for me," said Queen Louise's favourite brother to her, "although I must admit it is a manner that impresses his people." At the beginning of his reign particularly, self-confidence was a quality as deficient in Frederick William as it was excessive in his great-grandson William II. He believed himself the most insignificant and worthless mortal ever called to a throne, and he lived in perpetual fear of losing his Louise, so infinitely his superior in beauty, brains, and charm. However unsuitable to the wearer of a crown this pusillanimity, this sense of inferiority, which he later tried to disguise under a brusque manner, nevertheless a certain modesty grew up under the shadow of these qualities, which atoned for much that was repellent in the man. In times of stress and sorrow his somewhat stupid and arid soul's very simplicity gave him a dignity and grandeur that was in itself attractive. "So I am no more than any common husband!" he said, we are told, his eyes red with weeping, when he heard of one of his wife's infidelities. The shy withdrawal into himself in which he took refuge when misfortune overtook him as man or as king called out the sympathy of all who saw or shared his trouble. "He was great in suffering, not in action," said Hardenberg, who had observed him under all sorts of circumstances; and a weebegone old lord-high-steward's lady, who must have seen weeping and wailing

enough during her sixty-nine years at the Prussian Court, tells us that she never saw or felt anything more moving than the few difficult tears that welled from the cold, hard eyes of Frederick William II in moments of extremest emotion like a tiny spring from the hard rock. This knightly bearing in misfortune certainly did much to keep the King in favour with his patient subjects even during the final horrible years of his reactionary policy, his everlasting restrictions and obstructions. To the last people remembered to his credit the days after Tilsit, when he had endured composedly, submissively, bowing to destiny. Again, he did very well in trusting himself (unlike his great-grandson) to the faith and loyalty of his subjects, and in not taking to flight the moment the stormy waters rose to his gold epaulettes. Mistrustful as he was at other times, he was content that his fate should be bound up with that of his country, and he was zealous that patriotic instruction should be given in the schools, and that the great deeds of his dynasty should be rumoured abroad among the people. He prepared the way for the later canonization of his Queen Louise, whose superiority he had no longer any need to fear when she was dead, by continually singing her praises as his revered consort.

In common with his self-indulgent but sanctimonious father he was inclined to piety, though with him it seldom took the sentimental and extravagant forms which inclined Frederick William II to hypocritical devotees and canting humbugs like Wöllner. On one solitary occasion the ecstatic Czar Alexander, the only man whom the King was inclined to imitate in matters of outward behaviour, managed to inspire him with enthusiasm for a high-flown idea—that of the “Holy Alliance,” this “resounding Nothing,” as the low-minded Metternich called it, a time-honoured league of the sovereigns of Europe against the spirit of unbelief and of popular freedom. A regular Sunday church-goer, the King in general approved of

moderation in matters of religion as in other things—"Moderation" being another favourite catchword of his. Although he liked to hang the walls of his rooms with copies of Raphaels, such as the Sistine Madonna, and heads of Christ in the sweet and sickly Nazarene taste, and although he built churches whenever possible, he did not let the parsons get the upper hand of him; neither the Lutheran-Reformed, whom he attempted to unite in one body, not altogether with success, nor the Catholics, whose Archbishop of Cologne, Droste zu Vischering, he imprisoned in the fortress of Minden on quite untenable charges of inciting to rebellion. "Imprison him!" was, indeed, one of his most frequent commands, uttered in his rough, harsh, rasping voice as mechanically as if he were a beadle, so that it may be said of him that, sparing as he was of the death sentence, of all the Kings of Prussia he inflicted the most punishments by loss of freedom. Was not the very first act of his reign the imprisonment of his father's mistress?

None the less, as the father of a family, he had many good points. He was, it is true, something of a domestic tyrant, and wound up the procedure of his Court like a repeater-watch, so that each day exactly resembled another. Life at this monarch's Court, which a contemporary writer attacked "amusingly, sceptically, and bitterly," was, indeed, so precise and so dull that it was sufficient in itself to make Queen Louise look forward to every journey that varied her dreary existence there as to a taste of Paradise. "The fellow should have been a tailor," said Napoleon once; "he knew exactly how many inches of cloth should go to the making of a soldier's coat, and his chief occupation was dressing up his angular body in a new uniform almost every day!" But the morose monarch put on his friendliest face in his home circles, and could be actually good-humoured, sympathetic, and high-spirited at family festivities and children's parties—a fact which the two eldest

sons in particular, whom he brought up in fear of the Lord, always remembered with tenderness; for when a man laughs but seldom his slightest sign of gaiety is an agreeable surprise to those about him. Even as Crown Prince he took a facile pleasure in lighter theatrical pieces, such as comedies and farces. "My life is sad enough," he wrote to his betrothed, with the usual empty excuse of the Philistine and despiser of poetry; "I need gayer reading." To the distress of his Court theatrical manager this taste for the commonplace, for mere light entertainment, grew on him with age, so that Count Brühl in Berlin, and later his successor, Count Redern, had to put on Kotzebue and lesser buffoons far more often than Schiller, Goethe, or even Kleist. His Majesty saw *Seven Girls in Uniform*, a hopelessly insipid hotch-potch, no less than twenty times, much to the Court Chaplain's disgust!

In fiction as in life he could not away with anything extravagant or terrible. Very significantly for him, the one sentence he was wont to speak in full was, "I cannot do with visionaries." His trust in human nature had never been strong, but after Jena and Tilsit it seems to have collapsed altogether. The mistrustfulness that went with him as constantly as his shadow was actually an advantage to him at times in affairs of Government. For instance, his intrinsic dislike for, and fear of, Stein was, from a personal point of view, not unjustified. The Imperial Baron cared far less for the preservation of the House of Hohenzollern or for its present representative, whom he despised, than for the prosperity and aggrandizement of Germany. Stein's "Germany" was, however, a matter of complete indifference to Prussia's King—scarcely even a geographical concept. By dint of regarding every human being with extreme suspicion, and with the help of a number of very loyal and subservient "*Geheimräte*," Frederick William III succeeded in ruling his Prussia for forty-three years (almost as long as Frederick the Great), exactly as if it were still

the feudal fief of "*Pruzzen*." He did not bother his head about the influx of more freedom-loving subjects which the acquisition of the Rhineland and Westphalia by the Congress of Vienna had brought him. A strict, old-fashioned, patriarchal form of Government was this ruler's ideal; he wore his hair *en queue* till after the Battle of Prussian-Eylau, and preferred to avoid all contact with the middle classes. He coddled and petted the nobility, which, according to a saying, both sad and true, of Ludwig Uhland, the people's friend, "had won again at Leipzig." Like his great-uncle Frederick, he gave army appointments and, worse still, civil administrative posts, in Prussia only to nobles, and was very determined that no young woman of the middle classes should be called "Fraulein" before marriage—a title reserved for noble young ladies—but simply "Mamsell"! In questions of foreign policy, even after the great popular victory of Leipzig, Frederick William recognized only one possible line of conduct, the same that had been graven on his superficial and limited intelligence before that great event, namely, unconditional friendship with Russia and the Czar's dynasty, with which he had forged fresh links by the marriage of his favourite daughter Charlotte to the Czarevitch. Yet the stability of his policy (in contrast to his great-grandson's weather-cock procedure which sounded the death-knell of the Prussian monarchy) did ensure quiet and peaceable relations with his powerful neighbours, at the same time that his sense of Royal comradeship led him to do all he could to keep on good terms with, and support in power as his "*chers frères et cousins*," whatever royalties passed muster for the time being in western France. The consequence was that this King was a real sustainer of the peace of Europe for a quarter of a century—a fact which makes up for many of his misdeeds. As a nervous man he avoided bloodshed when he could. He liked the standing conscript army, which he maintained far into

the nineteenth century, and long after the Napoleonic wars were over, simply because it delighted him, as an order-loving Prince, to divide his country into military districts, and because—another link with William II—it gave him the employment of improving the organization and equipment of the troops, and designing a new uniform every now and then. Even the chase, the Royal sport *par excellence*, revolted him. He had the satisfaction of seeing his forthright frigidity, his prudishness, his very manner of speech give rise to “schools,” become the mode and the fashion. The so-called “*Biedermeierbewegung*” in Germany (roughly corresponding to the more prudish aspects of “Victorianism” in England) took much of its peculiar colour from the prim and formal character of the King. It was he, too, who introduced into Germany the long narrow pantaloons, the dark-coloured trousers reaching below the knee, which he considered comfortable, economical, and simple garments. He was the first Prince to wear them, which he did comparatively early, in 1797, on the promenade at Pyrmont.

Like most of the Hohenzollerns he showed little enthusiasm for the Fine Arts. The Brandenburger Schinkel, tinctured with classicism, was his best architect; his favourite sculptor was Rauch, formerly his valet, and his favourite painter Krüger, with his pictures of horses and soldiers. Yet in his perpetual withdrawal from anything “middle-class,” which to him always meant the same thing as “vulgar,” he did not find it easy to establish any intimate relations with these “artist fellows,” nor even, like Charles Augustus, who later regarded him with permanent amazement as a miracle of self-possession, to become an art patron. As a child Frederick William III had been terrified of the glass coach drawn by eight horses in which his careless, unconventional father used to drive about. Later it became more and more a matter of principle and of inclination with him—a hobby even—never to be con-

spicuous, and he impressed the same idea on his officers and soldiers as a first rule of conduct. He thoroughly enjoyed lounging about the Christmas fair in Berlin, unnoticed and unnoticeable, watching a catch of fish at Stralau, or looking at a new panorama. He bequeathed this gratifying simplicity of taste in yet greater measure to his son William, the Emperor to be. He was very moderate also in eating and drinking. He was as rarely observed to be exhilarated as he was seen to smile—or to laugh, and that was practically never. When his eldest son got a little merry on champagne, an amusement which later became a harmless and pleasant habit with him, Frederick William III turned a scornful back upon him, and, in accordance with his custom of punishing every offence with imprisonment, ordered him three days' strict confinement to the house. He was most careful to avoid carouses and banquets whenever possible. The King's only self-indulgence was in the matter of fruit, of which he always kept a plateful in his study.

Like most sober, frugal, and moderate persons he attained a ripe old age. He died, as did Queen Louise, of pneumonia, in the arms of his second wife, the Princess Liegnitz, to whom in the last delirium of fever he babbled the following orders: "Don't forget wind clocks and set by my little watch! Mustn't get fast! Regulate everything by me!" And thereupon was gathered to his fathers.

QUEEN LOUISE

(1776-1810)

HOWEVER much one may revere this lady, however conscious one may be of her great charm, it is impossible to maintain that she always took her marriage vows very seriously, particularly in the early days of a union arranged less by her own future husband than by the young man's father, the fat but inflammable Frederick William II of Prussia. That Royal lady-killer made the acquaintance of Louise and her pretty, witty sister Fredericka in the theatre at Frankfort, where in his usual jolly and dissolute fashion he was consoling himself for the loss of a campaign against revolutionary France in the society of one of the ladies of that town. The merry monarch was conquered at once by the charms of the two lovely Mecklenburgish Princesses, and was immediately all on fire for his two sons, the Crown Prince and his next brother, to fall in love with the two girls and marry them forthwith. By this time, however, his own reputation for loose morals had become rather too widespread, and very nearly put a fatal obstacle in the way of the alliances he was planning, for the Princesses' maternal relatives in Darmstadt, particularly their aunts and cousins, entertained not unjustifiable doubts as to the wisdom of their marrying into the family of a debauchee, who had actually gone through the comedy of getting the blessing of the Church for his irregular unions.

All these virtuous feminine objections, however, were eventually overcome by the weighty, and at the same time engaging, personality of Frederick William himself, by the deep respect still felt throughout Germany for the successors and dynasty of Frederick the Great, and, last but not least, by the Crown Prince Frederick's own high

personal reputation as a quiet, steady-going, and virtuous Prince.

In the event, the Prince's father, who shared none of these qualities, succeeded in persuading the Princesses' grandmother to listen to his proposals on his sons' behalf. The old lady, an easy-going, pious creature, had taken charge of her two grand-daughters after the early deaths of their mother and stepmother, and had brought them up with her in Darmstadt, where they spoke French, the universal Court language of the day. Darmstadt accordingly was the real home of the future Queen Louise, whose warm-hearted, sociable temperament made her contemporaries feel (as her letters and sayings make us feel to-day) that she was a true South German, despite the fact that she was the daughter of a Prince of Mecklenburg and happened to be born in Hanover.

The Princesses' good-hearted, gossipy grandmother did not eventually say nay to the fat King's wooing, and Louise's father, an honest, direct soldier, whom his daughter addressed in her letters later as "*Bester Pää*," nodded his consent forthwith, so that the Crown Prince was free without more ado to "stammer"—as he himself said later—his addresses to his intended bride in person. "We knew straight away without any beating about the bush where we were with each other," said his betrothed after her first interview with the Prussian Prince, whom she thought extremely kind and straight and "extraordinarily honest!" The young man himself was overwhelmed with happiness, as, indeed, he had every reason to be. He, stiff, inclined to be sulky, undecided, cold, prudish, and dull, had suddenly become the possessor of a young Princess who was not only unusually beautiful, but was also merry-hearted, high-spirited, entertaining, stimulating, and lovable. In the first pride of conquest he even got a little above his usual self. "You cannot believe how blissfully happy I am," he wrote to his mother, sitting brooding in her castle at Charlottenburg,

too embittered by her husband's neglect to believe much in happiness either in love or marriage.

Both Louise and Fredericka were married on Christmas Eve, 1793, in the "White Hall" at Berlin with all appropriate rejoicings, but it cannot have been long before Louise suffered a reaction from her first bridal ecstasies over her Hohenzollern Prince. Recovering from the intoxication of the wedding festivities, the whole joyless, insipid, rigid, and unsociable character of her awkward helpmeet became apparent to her, and she was in despair at the thought that she was tied for better or worse to a person so inelastic and unimpressionable. There can be no question but that her frigid young husband's fiery younger uncle, Prince Louis Ferdinand, made a very deep impression upon her during her difficult honeymoon weeks. The Prince, a son of the weak Prince Ferdinand, one of Frederick the Great's brothers, had at that time a load of debts about his neck and of love-affairs about his heart. In this state of emotional turmoil he made the acquaintance of the two charming young Princesses who had just entered the family. Louise, to dull her sense of disillusionment in her dreary husband, had plunged into a whirl of social gaieties, determined in reckless mood to dance herself to death. How far things went between herself and Ferdinand in those days none can tell but the pair themselves. It is easy to see that the two, who were in any case alike in many respects and mutually sympathetic, must have felt strongly drawn to each other at that time; he, reckless, passionate, wild, in revolt against the commonplaces of life; she, an ardent woman, disappointed and unhappy in wedlock with a cold and strait-laced dullard. Whether her first still-born child or her first son, the future King William IV, who at times showed traces of wit, spirit, and creative ability, were the fruit of her impetuous friendship with the brilliant Prince Louis Ferdinand, as some Court gossip has asserted, is again a question only to be answered by the pair con-

cerned; or perhaps not even by them, but only by the ever-restless, ever-active spirit of creation.

For in name and in fact Louise was Frederick's wife, and remained so even during those days of intrigue. At a time when Frederick William II could celebrate his bigamous unions in church, and when Louis Ferdinand's mother, for example, shared her affections for years between her husband and a certain Count Schmettau, "whose detestable race," as Frederick the Great put it, "she propagated in several offspring," public opinion was less strict and less unnatural on the question of marital fidelity, and less timid in moral matters altogether, than it is to-day.

Later Prince Louis Ferdinand certainly formed a connection of considerable duration with the Queen's favourite sister, the Princess Fredericka, his nephew Louis's wife. This sister of Louise, her adored and lifelong confidante, became more and more the amorist as years went on. After her husband's early death she married again at once, and, in the course of wedlock with a tipsy Prince, became intimate with Cumberland, Metternich, Gentz, and others, until chance made her ancestress of the Royal House of Hanover, when she brought into the world the blind King George V, Hanover's last ruler, whom the House of Hohenzollern treated so shabbily in later years.

In contrast to her sister, Louise became year by year graver, more self-controlled, and more dignified as the wife of her gloomy, monosyllabic, and precise spouse. She soon gave up her "*Ferdinanderie*," as her friendship with the Prince was mockingly called, and devoted herself more and more to her husband, and to his tastes and tasks. Though shortly before the birth of her eldest son she danced all night, until even her jolly father-in-law, Frederick William II, launched his veto against her rage for amusement, she awaited the birth of the next child, the future Emperor William I, in philosophical quiet, meditating on her duties as wife and mother, and actually putting the former into

practice by devotedly nursing her husband when he fell ill of a quinsy. In Prussia, at her duty-loving husband's side, she had learned to think of herself as a soldier's wife, and to revere her sullen spouse as the bravest man of his day. "Do stop playing the hero of romance," she wrote in this new phase to her brother, whom she clung to with characteristically intense family feeling, when she heard that he had fallen madly in love with some worthy burgher's daughter in Rostock. She even began to try to make good the deficiencies in her childhood's scanty and superficial education, of which touching relics survive to-day in a number of blotted exercise-books. She took an interest, if not a very penetrating one, in Herder's philosophy, and begged old Prince Henry, Frederick the Great's cultured brother, to recommend her books to read, though as they were all in French she did not care for them much. Through some of her ladies-in-waiting, and the ladies of Berlin society in general, she came into touch with the intellectual and artistic atmosphere of Weimar. Schiller speedily became her favourite poet, whereas she disliked Jean Paul as a "mixture of the trivial and the sanctimonious." These easy enthusiasms for the literature of the day were a great vexation to her inartistic husband, from whom she with difficulty extracted sixty louis d'or annually for another German poet, young Heinrich von Kleist. It was for a time only that she gave herself up to this "eccentric, fashionable literature," as the King disparagingly called it. The jealous and small-minded monarch, constantly afraid that Louise might slip away from him again, took all the precautions he could that she should not overpass him too greatly in cultural attainments, just as, in fact, he always did his Royal best to spoil her pleasure in all the delights and exaltations which heighten existence. Even so, much to his distress and uneasiness, she would sometimes actually quote passages from *Wallenstein* during discussions of State affairs in which she took part, and while they were at

Memel insisted on reading its author's *Fall of the Netherlands*. Süvern, an elderly and intellectually arid schoolmaster and philologist, together with the lofty and somewhat long-winded physician, Hufeland, became her later tutors and advisers in all questions of scholarship. Her early death prevented her from doing much for the education and training of her children. Her relations with her offspring, of which there were nine, were tender but unprejudiced. As her portrait-painter, Mme. le Brun, relates, she did not think them pretty. "And, indeed," adds that lady, "when I came to know this rare and golden Queen's little brood, I could not but think her right!"

It is a thousand pities that the school-history-book attitude, pious but inane, towards this remarkable woman has made a saint and an exalted heroine of her. Actually this very natural, sensual woman was a magnificent, roguish, childlike, guileless creature, who suffered more through her marriage with a prude than from the misfortunes which happened to overtake Prussia in her day. Her very letters, in which fragments of German bubble up again and again amongst the carefully acquired French turns of speech, reveal a simple heart, unspoiled by education, very like that which beat in the bosom of her motherly friend Frau Aja, Goethe's mother. As a child on visits from Darmstadt to Frankfort she had played happily by the fountain in that lady's garden, and later as a woman she had found solace in unhappiness at the springs of her great son's poetry. One of her letters to her betrothed, Frederick William the commonplace, begins without preamble with the words, "Green, green parsley and lettuce!" and another time she writes to the same wet-blanket, "I shall be so glad when I see you again that I shall feel like dancing a solo, like Herod's daughter, before the whole army to the tune of '*Wenn's immer, wenn's immer so wär!*' *Adieu, altesse royale de mon cœur.*—I must be off to church now or my granddam will beat me!" She cannot tell her

solemn bridegroom often enough that she is "full of joy," she, who as a child was called by her family "madcap Louise," "*Louise l'étourdie*," "merry Luisch," or even "Jungfer Husch" (Miss Hurry), for her dreadful untidiness. She wrote the most wonderful love-letters to her husband, containing such passages as: "I slept yesterday in our Palace in Berlin, while you had to be away at the cruel war! Do you know, I was lucky enough to find the pillow you slept on, and I laid my head on that, and slept most sweetly; but not on the bed—that would have been too much for my feelings—but on the couch. For the same reason I have not been down to your room, where we were so happy together those last days. But I sat at your desk and looked at the soldiers you painted. Yours and mine—and it came back to me so vividly where this one or that was painted! And afterwards, those moments we spent in the grotto in the new garden before we left—I with you, and even if they were only moments, what happy ones they were! And now—ah, how different everything is, for I miss you everywhere, dear, darling husband!"

After years of marriage with her taciturn, surly spouse she could still write him these lines—the most delightful, we feel to-day, of any she has left behind her. "Most High and Mighty King and Lord! Among the many petitions which Your Royal Majesty receives daily, may Your Majesty yet deign to illumine this one with a most gracious glance, so that my most submissive, my most humble, my most piteous petition may not remain ungranted! The accompanying stockings are sent as samples of my skill in the art of knitting, in the hope that they may assist me in my petition, which is this, 'that Your Majesty will do me the favour to permit me to knit all Your Majesty's stockings for the future, at the same time granting me the title of Your Gracious Majesty's Court-Knitter-in-Ordinary.' I would acknowledge this favour all my life long with the deepest humility, and die with a heart full of gratitude as

Your Most Royal Majesty's most dutiful maid and subject, Louise."

Louise was one of those few women who do not take easily to the consideration and adjudication of affairs of State: she was too hot-blooded, too temperamentally impetuous; she was always on fire for some man or other whom she regarded as the saviour of the moment. After the humiliating Treaty of Tilsit, Baron von Stein was to be the man who would bring salvation. "If he would only come! With his great brain, his far-reaching intellect, he knows ways out of the difficulty, perhaps, which are hidden from us," she writes at the time to a friend, and positively forces the rock-like, stubborn man on the King, who loathes him for his rough manners and his resolute character. Two years later she is equally enthusiastic for Stein's exact opposite, the slippery Hardenberg, this "miracle shining with virtue," and does not rest content till that very smooth person, who had been chief Minister of State once previously and whose talent for flattery rendered him far more acceptable to the King than his predecessor in the Queen's esteem, is once more pilot of Prussian affairs. As for the intractable Stein whom he is ousting, she sees him go with a sigh of contentment and relief, having perceived with feminine intuition that he looks upon her as a "silly little woman."

She suffered her worst disillusionment in the Czar Alexander I, whom she encountered at first with such enthusiastic friendliness that Napoleon, in the slanderous pamphlets he put about against Louise as the "Prussian Helen" who had caused the war, even dared to accuse her of amorous relations with that potentate. She it was undoubtedly who staged the somewhat theatrical, mid-night fraternization of her husband with the Czar at the tomb of Frederick the Great, for such a public exhibition of his feelings was quite foreign to the dry and unromantic Frederick William III. Indeed, he strictly forbade her from



QUEEN LOUISE, 1799
Bust by Johann Gottfried Schadow

the first to make "scenes," or any visible display of affection on the occasions of their meeting in public, when his warmer-blooded wife would come dangerously near dancing for excess of joy. Her very love of dress, her fondness for jewels, more especially pearls, got on his nerves, and he preferred to see her quite without ornament. But it was a very bitter experience to Louise to see her womanhood's ideal man, her dearest cousin of Russia, the peerless Alexander whose handsome, regular features she had thought illumined with angelic virtues, calmly leaving Prussia to go to the dogs while trying to make the best possible bargain for Russia with Napoleon after the disastrous Battle of Friedland. Her shining knight, her operatic hero, had dwindled to a mere time-server, weary of well-doing, capable, for his own advantage, of subscribing to the infamous Peace of Tilsit.

But she was to suffer yet a final pang through her one-time idol Alexander on the outwardly brilliant and successful visit to St. Petersburg, which Stein had urgently opposed on the ground of its great costliness at a time when money was very short in Prussia. Louise, however, was thirsting for any sort of distraction or amusement in the days following Prussia's collapse, and was consequently ready to accept the ceremonious invitation which the Czar extended to herself and her husband to make up for his deficiencies at the Peace of Tilsit. When she stood with Frederick William III, as stiff as a poker beside her, in the cold magnificence of the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg, and was received by the Czar, the Emperor of her dreams, standing between his unhappy consort and his haughty Polish mistress, Louise realized for the first time, in true womanly fashion, that this Emperor, this most glorious of all wearers of the crown, was after all a very earthly, self-seeking person, who suddenly struck her as entirely unspiritual. Again, a very woman, despite the luxurious set of arctic fox furs with which Alexander had just honoured her as

his *fée enchanteresse*, she vehemently took sides with the Czarina, and opened her whole heart to her and to the Czar's mother, a proceeding which naturally lost her the good graces of the Emperor, who would never afterwards exchange a word with her on political matters."

Although she has since been, quite falsely, named Prussia's miracle-working benefactress, her much-talked-of share in the parleying at Tilsit, that painful scene in which she in fact allowed herself to be forced to take part to satisfy Hardenberg's wounded feelings, speedily showed Napoleon that her dabbings in public affairs were hardly to be taken very seriously. Napoleon at once turned the conversation on matters of dress, inquiring where she had got the beautiful gown she had put on in his honour. Clearly the discussions had not long proceeded before he saw that he had hitherto overvalued the Queen as a politician, and indeed, after his meeting with Louise at Tilsit, he discontinued his previous public attacks upon her as an instigator of war, a *regina guerriera*.

Louise herself was pleasantly surprised by the personal impressions she received of this "offscouring of Hell," this "horrible man," this "monster," this "tiger," this "wretch"—as she had previously named him in speech and writing. She could find no trace of the vulgarity which her husband had read in the Corsican's face. On the contrary, she thought him handsome, and found in his face, especially when he smiled, a remarkable resemblance to the Roman Emperors of old. That the whole tiresome scene between her and Napoleon could lead to no good whatever might have been foreseen, as Stein maliciously remarked, "by any blockhead, even Hardenberg." "I poured out my soul in vain against a rock of bronze," the Queen herself said later, when all her pleas for her husband, her children, and her country had been received by the conqueror with such cold, polite phrases as "We will see. I will give the matter my attention."

Although Louise was very deeply depressed by all the

terrible events of Prussia's bitter years, and not least by her own lack of personal success in statecraft—"I am only just thirty, but I have already outlived myself!" she said at that time—we must not suppose her to have been that perpetually sorrowful heroine, in whose mourning robes she used to be tricked out, as the pattern "Mother of her country," in all our girls' schools. She knew how to do without, and was as capable as her husband Frederick William of being happy in reduced circumstances. After all, the days they had spent together as Crown Prince and Princess in the simple country village of Paretz—she as "Mayoress" and "*Gnädige Frau*"—had been among the happiest of their married life. Moreover, even in the darkest days of that sad time, such Court amusements as were possible away from Berlin were not entirely forgone. Even in Memel—the "Ultima Thule" of Prussia, the last corner of land left to the King—they enjoyed sledging parties to the lighthouse in winter, and in summer sea-bathing, of which the King particularly, with whom banishment and straitened circumstances agreed admirably, was very fond. The Crown Prince, the future Frederick William IV, used often to say that he owed the strongest and pleasantest of his youthful impressions to the summer months they spent among the sand-dunes on the lonely amber coasts during those years of misfortune. They began to believe that the country round Memel had "an Ossian-like beauty and grandeur," and later, when they were able—much against the inclinations of Frederick William III—to exchange Memel for Königsberg, the Queen, at least, made a very determined attempt to console herself for the shame of Prussia's collapse and the ruthless victor's constant oppression of the land, in the society of the local *intelligentzia* and in theatre-going.

It is a total perversion of the truth to attempt to connect Louise's early death with the disaster to Prussia, and to make that life-loving, gay, and usually quite untroubled

lady die of a broken heart. The solemn and artificial image beneath which our tasteless and mendacious patriotic historians have sought to enshrine her, is a hopelessly unsuitable memorial to a joyous nature whose end was more like that of a *scherzo* than of a *marche funèbre*. She died of no long-drawn-out mental suffering, but of a sudden and speedily fatal inflammation of the lungs, which she contracted on a journey to Neustrelitz. This pleasure trip to visit her father and her eighty-one-year-old grandmother, the pious guardian of her childhood, was destined to be the last gratification of a life by no means barren of happy days. She had had to ask her pettifogging husband a great many times before he allowed her the jaunt for which she was so eager. In the letter she wrote a month before her death to her "*Bester Pöp*" to announce her arrival, there was a reawakening of the old, wild, madcap Louise who used to sing "Our cat has seven kittens" with her sisters when her tutor's and governesses' backs were turned. "*Bester Vater*," she wrote, quite beside herself with joy, in her funny German, "I am quite mad and crazy! The dear, sweet King has this very moment given me leave to come and see you! I am quite mad and so happy that I could almost have a fit! But I must regain my composure because the King has given me a whole lot of commissions. I shall spoil my own pleasure, I know, because often when I have been excessively glad like this some disappointment has overtaken me, and if anything of the sort were to happen now it would be *vraiment affreux*." And she adds as a postscript without the slightest foreboding of approaching death, "We won't bring a doctor, as if I break my neck father's physician will be able to stick it together again for me."

As a recognized and celebrated beauty in her day she was painted many times. Later, after her popular canonization, she was immortalized thus on countless occasions, and her pure, regular, childlike features very often made as empty as those of a doll. To her chiefest glories, her

hemp-blond, curly hair, of which a ringlet is preserved in the Hohenzollern Domestic Museum, and the flash of her blue eyes, no portrait could do justice; nor to her clear complexion, which was rosy when she was a girl and later became whiter, almost snow-white. Her clear, soft voice for a time entranced the palace rooms in Berlin and Potsdam, used only to the rasping, dictatorial croaking of the Hohenzollerns, like that of some miraculous singing-bird. Her hands and feet, and her neck, were a little overdeveloped, but these slight imperfections—"ces légères imperfections"—in the judgment of Madame Vigée le Brun, the fashionable painter of the day, did little to disturb the spell of enchantment exercised by this richly endowed woman. At the very end of her short life she began to put on flesh a little, to become comfortable and motherly. In those years, as her son William tells us, she always carried a little green silk purse.

The widower, Frederick William III, who never quite woke up to her inestimable value till she was gone, was not satisfied with any of the representations of the departed with which he was overwhelmed at the victorious conclusions of the War of Liberation against Napoleon; for now that the dynasty had been re-established by Blücher and the people's courage, the dead Queen's memory began to receive the halo of martyrdom. The unemotional King, who had subsequently comforted himself for the loss of his peerless Louise by a left-handed marriage with the young and pretty Countess Harrach, a creature as insignificant as himself, preferred, on the whole, the peaceful effigy in marble which the sculptor Rauch carved for her grave in Charlottenburg, the "*Mausoleum*," as it was called, at the suggestion of Schinkel, who designed the plans for this memorial chapel. There the most child-like of Prussia's Queens sleeps, as it were, doubly—both beneath the white sarcophagus and upon it, carved in imperishable marble, on her countenance the innocent, peaceful expression the

artist has given her in this his masterpiece. Once only, they say, a faint shadow of distress passed over the beautiful sleeping face. It was in 1873, when the body of the Countess Harrach, whom the King had created Princess von Liegnitz, was buried in the same place at her feet. But the fleeting, sorrowful smile faded almost instantaneously, leaving once more that lovely expression of perfect reconciliation with Fate and with the whole world-process, upon the dead Queen's face.

PRINCE LOUIS FERDINAND

(1772-1806)

"I valued this Prince because he was the most human person I ever met in my life."

LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN

THE Prince came into his quarters in a towering rage. The war for which he was panting, the necessary passage of arms with Napoleon that Prussia had been putting off from year to year, had again been postponed—probably thanks to that circumspection-mad Count von Haugwitz, whom the Prince hated even more, if possible, than Bonaparte himself. Angrily he chucked his sword into a corner. Why did not the King disarm all his forces at once and hand them over, like eunuchs, to this pseudo-Emperor—Frederick the Great's glorious army before which, at Rossbach, the superior numbers of the French had run like hares! Hurriedly, as if he were ashamed, the Prince divested himself of the rest of his arms and equipment, but after unbuckling his pistols he held them in his hand for a moment, meditating, as often in his life before, on their dark barrels. Then, with a gesture of disgust, he threw them aside.

A man came in with the candles the Prince had called for, and set them on the writing-table as the light began to fail.

"A bottle of champagne!" ordered Louis Ferdinand, and threw himself into a chair before the heaped-up books and papers which covered the table in wild confusion. How his soul revolted at having to sit here in the soft candle-light, far from the smell of powder, working off his thirst for action in futile scribbings, in works on tactics, or in memorials and reports to the King, to which that well-bred but deed-shy monarch condescended at best to make

evasive replies! And what, in any case, were his military exercises worth? General Scharnhorst, the head of the college for infantry and cavalry officers in Berlin, had, indeed, been so good as to praise them very warmly, but the Prince was clear-sighted and reflective enough to enter at least half of these compliments, even from Scharnhorst, to the credit of his Royal rank. Moreover, he did not greatly value the art of commenting on military matters after the event. Visiting old battlefields was essentially an idle occupation—something for military philosophers and staff generals, and he was neither one nor the other. How often had he not been invited to go and see the battlefields in Northern Italy, where, to his bitter envy, Bonaparte had won the title of the greatest soldier since Frederick the Great! If the Prince were ever to accept the invitation and journey there, it would not be to view the traces of that upstart's military genius which had rendered such and such villages, bridges, or forts illustrious, but to seek out the most favourable possibilities for a fresh campaign to win back for Austria her lost Italian provinces! When the champagne was brought the Prince gulped down three glasses. Then he took from a secret recess in his book-case a large notebook with big "brief" pages, already partly filled with his own writing. He flung it open, and without turning it over to look for the place where he had left off he dipped his quill in the ink—not the black ink with which he wrote letters, notes, and compositions in his small German script, but in the red ink specially reserved for this manuscript. He wrote: "It is an incomprehensible thing that the whole of Europe with the exception of England should submit to the ruthless despotism of this monster Napoleon! In spite of all their fine new talk of "Liberty and Equality" most men must be by nature slaves. How else can the tragic drama this world-theatre has too long presented be otherwise explained?"

"I could restrain my indignation if I saw that this lawyer's



PRINCE LOUIS FERDINAND, 1801 (died 1806)
Bust by Carl Wichmann

on, the artillery lieutenant risen to be Emperor, had spread the great ethical conceptions of the French Revolution abroad among the peoples, if he had propagated the beliefs of that movement as the apostles of Christianity once preached its doctrines.

"But what has he done? Instead of 'Fraternity,' the last of the three commandments emblazoned on the tricolour, he has made an idol of Nationalism, an idol before whom our race shall tremble for all future generations. He has so flattered his nation's ambition that all her other tasks have to be set aside to satisfy it.

"That noble, upward sweep which in the last, the eighteenth, century seemed to be lifting mankind above its earthly accidents, its earthly limitations, has been completely crippled by this scorner of his race. This vainest of all representatives of the lust for power has thrown humanity back on its empty quest for domination and renown. A crowned philosopher, such as the noble Frederick was, would have shrugged scornful shoulders over this self-complacent abortion of a Prince, sunk in materialism and despotism, incapable of even wishing to be like *him*, the peerless!

"One has only to look attentively at this crowned adventurer's circle to recognize what a miserable figure, what a punchinello it is, who is duping all Europe! He will have none but flatterers and lickspittles about him, and practises a more flagrant nepotism than the worst of the Popes. All must bow to his whims. The one brother who is not to his liking, because he is far the finer man of the two, has to live in banishment, and even living so, as a retired scholar, is not secure of his life. Without any profound ideas of his own, Napoleon, when some kind of intellectual garb seems desirable, decks himself in the ideals of the Revolution, which in his heart he despises because he is too small to understand them; the things that were sacred and real to the originators of the Revolution, things that they wished

to translate into terms of life, become on his lips mere sarcasms or theatrical phrases.

"This comedian has not even the constancy and dignity as a freethinker which even a bastard of the Revolution ought to show. He, the former Jacobin general, coquettes with the Church, and so becomes the murderer of one great achievement of the human race after another!"

The Prince sprang up and snapped his pen in two. An overmastering disgust for all this writing, increasing with each line, rose up and choked him. A mere paper attack on this man, whom he would have liked to challenge to mortal combat in the tourney as in the glorious romantic days of knighthood, seemed to him utterly despicable. Instead of fighting sword in hand he had fallen to abuse, like a second Hamlet!

The Prince shuddered with disgust at his own impotence. Then hastily he gathered up the sheets, covered with red ink as if with his heart's blood, seized one of the two candles, went to the chimney-place, and set fire to the whole notebook as if it were a paper spill. Almost laughing, he watched while the flames devoured in a trice the work of hours of burning emotion. The hot hate he had put into those pages beat back upon his face to the last, actually singeing the darker eyebrows above the audacious blue eyes that were so like those of "*der alte Fritz*." He brushed back his fair locks, damp from the heat, and, striding up and down, emptied the rest of the champagne bottle in hasty draughts.

Slowly the paper consumed and fell to ashes; suddenly the Prince started at an idea that crossed his mind. Had it not been a cowardly act to destroy those pages? If they had come under Napoleon's eye they would have meant banishment, or even death for himself. Had not the Prince d'Enghien been condemned as a traitor and infamously shot at dawn for a less offence than this? Had not the son of the Bavarian Elector, the first King of Bavaria, Louis I, forfeited his throne through a few verses against Napoleon?

Had not a poor south German bookseller recently been sentenced by command of the "citizens' Emperor" simply for distributing a pamphlet stigmatizing Germany's humiliation?

Why, instead of burning the papers, had he not sent a courier with them to this oppressor of all freedom of thought, and so thrown his gauntlet in the fat, olive, yellow face? Yet what would he have achieved by that? A martyr's death was no death for him. He wanted to live and die as a soldier: that was the only worthy end for the nephew and godson of the greatest of Kings.

With shuddering reluctance the Prince turned back to the writing-table, where in place of his annihilated manuscript a row of books offered him their consolations. They were mostly French translations of the classics, the gifts of Baron von Stein or of his uncle Prince Henry, whose favourite nephew he had been. But to-day he could not have borne to read the lives of great men in Plutarch, and then quietly continue his own in this commonplace, ink-blotted century.

He opened the pianoforte where still lay the fresh manuscript of a *larghetto* he had jotted down the previous night, in the moonlight and afterglow of an evening spent in stimulating society. He struck a few chords of the *Eroica*, of all the great master's works his favourite and the one for which he, the Prince, had by his own enthusiasm won general recognition after its initial ill-success with the public. But he was cast down afresh at those glorious tones. What an everlasting, miserable apprentice he was, with his fourteen little musical works, compared with the giant Beethoven! The great Fritz, both in youth and age, had at least this excuse for his amateur attempts in the arts, that they had been a creditable means of filling up his leisure between battles. But for him, condemned to lifelong inaction, there was no such excuse. Let little, duodecimo princes feast their ears on flatteries of their talents and their alleged master-

pieces, *he* would share one thing at least with the great masters—that divine discontent, that pain which follows them like a shadow in all their creative endeavours to the very last.

He sprang up again, driven by the rhapsodical unrest that was in his blood. There was still one means of drug-ging himself to endure this life of tormenting inactivity between the twin darknesses of birth and death—the sweetest of all means, more salutary than music, more delightful than a talk with Goethe, the poet he honoured above all others—women! An evening without them was almost unthinkable for him.

He went back to his desk and wrote appointing a meeting on the morrow with his little friend in Berlin, the enchantingly natural Pauline Wiesel, in one of those sensuous love-letters that might almost be called Gallic, so rare are they among our German men, who are, for the most part, shy in such matters. He still hesitated for a little as to whether, exchanging one love for another, he should not go to sweet Henrietta Frommel. But after all, picturing her with the two children she had borne him, she seemed to him too *bourgeoise*, too homely.

He rang for his man, but saw that the lad had fallen asleep in his room. The night before he had kept him up till dawn making coffee and running this errand and that, and he was content that he should be making up now for the sleep he had lost. He had a kindly way with his servants.

The Prince opened the door into his bedroom. He had no antechamber, such as is usual with Princes. There was his dress uniform, lying ready for him—dress was a colourful affair in those days, even for soldiers, compared with our drab, “field-grey” times—a blue coat with a red collar and facings; on the facings, eight golden knots with hanging tassels; the coat cut away in front and fastened back to show the greater part of a white waistcoat, and open at

the neck where the shirt-frill emerged from the black cravat; white breeches and silk stockings; lastly, the three-cornered hat of a General, looped up with braid three fingers wide, and an ostrich feather buckled into the brim.

The Prince stood for some time gazing at all this multi-coloured magnificence laid out on the bed. Suddenly he was aware of a face, not unlike that white woman's face the death-doomed of his race are said to see when their hour draws near—but it was himself he saw lying there, clad in the gay uniform. Dead, a sabre cut on the pale brows, another on the crown of the head, a deep sword-thrust, welling blood, in the breast. It was just so that they found him, struck down in honourable combat with a brave French quarter-master, after the Battle of Saalfeld, the inauspicious beginning of the Prussian War with Napoleon in October 1806. And now he saw a couple of grenadiers come forward, and, to the sound of music as merry as he had ever known in the sunniest days of his life, lift him and lay him on a huge, sombre sarcophagus. Upon it a single word was written, but that the one for which mankind has made its greatest and most beautiful sacrifices—"Fatherland."

FREDERICK WILLIAM IV

(1795-1861)

PRUSSIA's condition was very far from unprosperous when the future Frederick William IV made his entrance into this world. His grandfather, childishly delighted at the birth of his first legitimate grandchild, had, it is true, signed the Treaty of Basle with France six months previously, an act greeted by the rest of Germany with mingled groans and curses. The fat monarch himself, however, free at last to attend to affairs in the East, did not regard the incident as either shameful, or even actually disadvantageous. What did he care about the German provinces beyond the Rhine? They mattered as little to him as had Alsace and Lorraine to his famous ancestor, the Great Elector. He wanted to have his hands free to deal with Russia and Austria, by whom he had been cheated over the recent Third Partition of Poland. Moreover, the esteem in which he was held personally by the world outside Germany had not been in the least diminished by the Treaty. The people who had gabbled about his lack of spirit had themselves, the Emperor of Austria not excluded, been obliged shortly afterwards to sing small and come to terms with France. Prussia itself, with its two wealthy capital cities of Berlin and Warsaw, was more extensive and more prosperous than ever before. With Prince Henry beside him, a grey old man who, warrior though he had been, had given his voice in favour of the Treaty of Basle, the well-favoured, portly monarch, as he held the new-born infant over the font, was as proud as any peacock. It was the last happy event in the full-blooded gentleman's life, for shortly afterwards he fell gravely ill, and two years later left the throne vacant for his phlegmatic son.

Those who had to do with the child early observed that, though very talented, he was over-excitabile. His education was first undertaken by a Magdeburg headmaster, Frederick Delbrück, a good, disinterested, but somewhat weak gentleman, whom Queen Louise had chosen for her son.

Frederick William III, already completely swallowed up and absorbed in Privy Councillors and affairs of State, left the care of their numerous children entirely in her hands. Louise, however, after her fashion, soon became dissatisfied with Delbrück. She was one of those sensible mothers who are not blindly enamoured of their children. Acutely aware that the little Prince was capricious, irritable, and obstinate, she remarks: "His manners are still detestable, and require that I should be very strict with him. The outward is all too closely connected with the inward. A child who will thrust with his elbows rather than use his hands gently and considerately when he wants something moved out of his way, has doubtless some corresponding defect of temperament." The boy's lively imagination and ready wit, his quick understanding, and his cleverness in drawing and in argument, did not blind his delightful mother to her eldest-born's regrettable lack of gentleness and true nobility of soul—deficiencies which, alas! he never remedied all his life. Even as a boy he was often violently headstrong and refractory, and would tease and torment his brothers and sisters till they drew away and refused to play with him. Delbrück, a feeble mentor, was content on these occasions to read the Prince a solemn lecture, and was proud and pleased to see him dissolve in tears of penitence at its conclusion.

This system of education, however, produced no lasting good results, and soon ceased to satisfy the child's independent-minded, courageous mother. She turned to Stein, who advised her to get rid of the milk-sop tutor and take instead one Ancillon—an entertaining, down-at-heel, vagabond

French pastor, whose wide experience of men and affairs Stein prized highly.

The Crown Prince, who had enjoyed a succession of stormy scenes with Delbrück, and had wallowed with him in virtue and piety, behaved like a hysterical girl when he heard that his one and only Delbrück was to be taken from him. To his father, who naturally had more important matters to attend to than the education of the heir-apparent, he swore that without Delbrück he could never be happy, and eventually, while his parents were hesitating about making the change, pretended to be ill, took to his bed, and shrieked and wept so wildly that on the doctors' advice it was decided to retain Delbrück—at least for a time.

During that period, however, Ancillon found ways of getting an even greater hold upon the excitable Prince's favour than the "one and only Delbrück." He was a mine of stories, especially stories of the horrors of the French Revolution, of which he had been an eye-witness in Paris in 1789. The consequence of all this was that when later, as King, the storms of the 'forty-eight lightened and thundered about him, Frederick William's bewildered mind was full of the possible parallels between his own fate and that which had overtaken Louis XVI and his family, the horrors of which Ancillon had so often exploited to make his childish hair stand on end. The Crown Prince's first military instructors were the usual Prussian Generals and Majors. They soon perceived that this Hohenzollern sprig was apparently one of the few of that stock who were not carried away by enthusiasm for soldiering. In this he presented a contrast to his younger brother William, who early told his papa that he felt himself born to the finest of all callings, that of the warrior. Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, his military tutors for a time, found themselves as nonplussed by the Crown Prince as the resolute Stein. He was apparently too intricate, not direct enough, for a soldier to understand. "This Crown Prince would rather



KING FREDERICK WILLIAM IV
After Franz Krüger

lead the streams back to their sources in the hills than regulate their course in the plains," said Gneisenau one day to Hardenberg, and it is perhaps the most apt comment ever made upon Frederick William IV, who was in love with difficulties, and even in affairs of State would avoid the obvious and easy way. Leopold von Gerlach, his aide-de-camp, his "*Polte*," his best friend, who, faintly disdainful, accompanied him everywhere as Mephistopheles did Faust, once made a striking epigram about him: "The King has unfortunately the gift of discerning the practicable side of a problem, and, for that very reason, despises it!"

In the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon the Crown Prince, irresolute and temperamental, can hardly be said to have covered himself with glory. One story told of the Prince and Blücher in those days is worth relating here. After the Battle of Bar-sur-Aube, it is said, "Marschall Vorwärts" took forcible hold of the young man and showed him the battlefield, strewn with dead and groaning wounded, remarking: "There, your Royal Highness, just look at the horrors for which that accursed Napoleon is responsible! Should not such a pig-dog and enemy of his kind be hunted off the face of the globe?"

As a matter of fact the future Frederick William IV hardly needed such a lesson to imbue him with a horror of all military exploits. From the cradle he was too soft-hearted to engage willingly in bloodshed of any kind. Even at the Royal hunting parties he later felt it his duty to institute he was a spectator rather than a true huntsman. One of the earliest entries in his childish copy-books runs: "My hand can scarcely lift a pound's weight, but my spirit can encompass the universe. How greatly superior is the power of thought to the strength of the body!" It is obvious that such a youngster would prefer the learned dissertations of Niebuhr, Ritter, or Savigny to the cast-iron lectures of Scharnhorst and Clausewitz on the whole brutal alphabet of war, with its basic proposition, "How can we annihilate

the enemy most speedily and most completely?" Niebuhr in particular, his history tutor, who thought the Prince's gifts extraordinary and said, "I have never seen so lovely a youthful nature," was very dear to him, and yet the future Frederick William IV with all his sensibility never possessed those qualities of heart which capture and retain the affections of men, and which his brother William exhibited in extraordinary measure.

On the stiff and reserved Frederick William III his eldest son's mercurial, versatile temperament made a remarkable impression. The King, who found utterance of any kind difficult and was never afflicted with ideas, was especially astounded by the boy's early manifestation of a ready wit and his dexterous use of his tongue. The young man's sober, pious, evangelical parent stood out for nearly four years against his son's choice of a bride in the younger sister of that amateur of the arts, King Louis I of Bavaria, who, like Prussia's Crown Prince, had a weakness for the days of chivalry and the cloister, upon the sole ground that the dark, southern beauty was of a faith other than that of the House of Hohenzollern. Fate, however, played Frederick William IV a trick in this matter, for a year later, when in Teplitz, he himself met and married morганatically the youthful Countess Harrach, a Bohemian and a far stricter Catholic than the Bavarian Princess, whose education had been tolerably liberal. For the love of her numerous Lutheran subjects the Princess did, as a matter of fact, speedily become a convert to Lutheranism—of course "as the result of the most complete conviction, and after a previous thorough preparation of heart," as the Court Gazette stated, or, rather, lied.

The ageing Frederick William III had in the meantime appointed the Crown Prince Regent of Poland, an office in which, according to a number of malicious tongues, he might better have been left for life. In addition the King made up to his son for the long postponement of his

honeymoon by the gift of the rose-entwined little castle of Charlottenhof, which Schinkel, to suit the Crown Prince's enthusiasm for the south, had transformed into a charming Italian villa. Later, after Frederick William III's death, his son, his "dear Fritz," removed to Sanssouci, the first Hohenzollern since Frederick the Great died who ventured to inhabit his castle on the "historic hill." The first and, indeed, the last; for, after his death there, Sanssouci became more and more a show-place, thrown open to the public in honour of "*der alte Fritz*" and his successors.

Frederick William IV's accession was acclaimed by the nation with almost as much jubilation, almost as deep a sigh of relief, as had greeted his grandfather's after the death of the one and only Fritz. People had had more than enough of a King who went in dread of all progress, and whose reign threatened to last for ever, and they hailed with delight the fresh breeze that seemed to blow over Prussia with the coming of the new ruler. The King's entry into Berlin, like his coronation at Königsberg, was made a popular festival. The whole Place of the Opera was covered in for the ceremony of the Estates' homage to the sovereign, which by the King's express wish—how significant to those who had eyes!—was to be carried out exactly as in 1797! The Court painter Krüger has immortalized the scene in a picture, only omitting the rain which descended from the heavens that day in torrents. Certain good acts on the new King's part at once gave rise to happy expectations. Ernst Moritz Arndt, author of the most popular song on the German Fatherland, was restored to his lectureship in Bonn University, an honour which, as the old man wrote to Bunsen, should have come ten years earlier, and which now left him almost indifferent. The police supervision to which the bold Jahn was still incomprehensibly subjected was removed, and the Order of the Iron Cross, which he should have had long before, was at last thrown to him. Furthermore, the new ruler

summoned to Berlin Schelling, the thinker, who, however, could not settle down there; Ruckert, the poet, who spoke so low that it was impossible to hear his lectures; Tieck, the dreamer, crippled by gout and by his exclusive devotion to the past; and Raumer, the historian, who soon lost favour by his speeches on public occasions. Frederick William IV, endeavouring to build up a second Sanssouci, a warm-hearted Sanssouci without "*der alte Fritz's*" mordant wit, was a little unfortunate in his relations with the world of Art. Herwegh, to whom he gave personal audience as representative of a conscientious opposition, became his bitterest and most malicious enemy, despite the fact that at parting the King called after him with a fine gesture, "Let us be honourable foes!" Of the two poets Freiligrath and Geibel, whom he sought to win over with a pension of three hundred talers apiece hush-money, only Geibel, the pious Lübecker, remained loyal, whereas the Westphalian Freiligrath speedily engaged in the most furious personal quarrels with the reigning monarch. For his non-political songs, Frederick William deprived the poet Hoffmann von Fallersleben, author of the German National Anthem, of his lectureship in Breslau, without pension, and he actually proposed to prosecute Prutz, a harmless satirist, for lèse-majesté, though fortunately old Alexander von Humboldt, who had saved his Royal friend from committing a number of follies, dissuaded him in time.

Frederick William IV had better success with the painters and architects to whom he extended his patronage. Kopisch, the moody poet-painter, was set to paint pictures of the Royal castles in and about Potsdam; Kaulbach to decorate the staircase of the new museum; Schinkel to restore the Rhenish Castle of Stolzenfels, and make it, with a certain straining of the possibilities, a Norman fortress; while Zwirner, Schinkel's Silesian disciple, was to finish Cologne Cathedral on an arbitrarily completed plan. As the country gradually grew to realize, "restoration" was

the new ruler's favourite word—a word which had by now become quite unfashionable elsewhere, more especially in France. "Restoration" went on everywhere at the King's orders, whether on the Rhine at Castle Stahleck above Bacharach, or on the Nogat at the ruins of Marienburg. For the Court servants and all his retinue he reintroduced the old magnificent liveries which had been *à la mode* under the first splendour-loving King of Prussia. After all, it began to appear that this Prince, who was forty-five at the time of his accession, was less eager for reforms than had at first been hoped. On the other hand, he revealed himself as an even more zealous churchgoer and church-builder than his father. He kept even his Generals to their church-going, and a number of them had themselves "daguerreotyped," Bible conspicuously in hand. When the Swabian, David Frederick Strauss, published his polemic *The Romantic on the Throne of the Cæsars*, a treatise on the Emperor Julian with obvious allusions to Frederick William IV, the King of Prussia was fitted with his label. And had he not, at the same time that he reinstated the aged Arndt, restored to honour the Hessian Minister, Hassenpflug ("Herr von Hass und Fluch"—Sir Hatred and Cursing—they called him), the best-hated man in his own country, and made him Lord Chief Justice in Prussia? That being so would any of the reforms hoped for at his accession ever be carried out? Thus the whisper ran among the people. Were they not to be cheated a second time—as by Frederick William III, so now by this son of his who talked, but did not act?

And, in fact, here at last in Frederick William IV was another Hohenzollern who *could* talk. He talked incessantly. His father and grandfather had been barely able to stammer, while Frederick the Great, their predecessor, though a master of conversation, was not given to "speaking." When he spoke at all he addressed his officers, and then only on exceptional occasions as before the Battle of

Leuthen. But this new monarch, with the resonant voice that in contrast to his predecessor's rasping tones had something soft, something of the parson, in it, spoke on every occasion, suitable or unsuitable, just as did, later, on an even more extensive scale, his successor William II, who resembled him temperamentally in many respects. Frederick William IV spoke of the ideal he hoped to see fulfilled of a Christian German State; spoke of the ancient, sacred loyalties, and of free Princes and a free people; spoke of the bogey of State machinery that spoiled the living contact between the Sovereign and his subjects; spoke of the necessity of including Austria, the Tyrol, and Triest in the German Empire, which without those provinces was like a face without a nose; spoke, when faced by ruins, of the beautifying rust of the centuries, and, when faced by the Weavers' and Spinners' Rising, of the sympathy in his heart for the labouring classes of the community; and he spoke of how he would never, never consent to a written parchment, regulating everything by its clauses, interposing as a kind of secondary Providence between God above and His Prussia. "For I and my House," said he, "we will serve the Lord—yea, verily!"

Yet all these unctuous and high-sounding words (which, after all, people could hear from any church pulpit on Sundays) could not disguise the fact that Prussia's monarch, acclaimed with such high hopes as the "People's Liberator," was, after all, an outworn, stick-in-the-mud personality, hostile to all change. For years he toyed with the idea of a Constitution and the formation of a Central *Landtag* for Prussia, but he vigorously rejected the principle that the majority of the people should share equally with the sovereign in the government of the country.

This was the position when the year of terror, the 'forty-eight, came upon him. At a time when his very crown depended, as it were, on a throw of the dice, no one can say that the King behaved unworthily.

While street fighting went on in Berlin and about the castle walls, a man without a trace of the soldier in him could hardly be expected to distinguish himself by vigorous decisions. The fact that after the first bloody interposition of the military he gave the order, or rather—very significant for him!—allowed the order to be wrung from him, for the withdrawal of the troops, is also by no means against him. It is very questionable whether further volleys into the mob, such as his younger brother William—then known as the “Grape-shot Prince”—advised, would not have stirred up so much bad blood that the insurrection would have swept away the whole Hohenzollern dynasty, as actually happened exactly seventy years later. It was not the “backbonelessness” that extremists, butchers, and fanatics have unjustly accused Frederick William IV of having shown in that riotous year that shook the very foundations of throne and altar in Prussia. The “Romantic” acted rightly, for the first time in his life perhaps, in *not* acting and in letting the red tide of revolution rush by. He did himself no dishonour when, after the departure of his troops, he placed himself for days under the protection of the municipality of Berlin, and addressed himself publicly to his people and the whole nation in two manifestos containing the noble and prophetic words, “Prussia is henceforth merged in Germany”; still less when he accorded a silent salute, standing with raised helmet at the Queen’s side, to those who fell at the March barricades for the people’s freedom. It was a chivalrous gesture of courtesy to his dead opponents, no more, and as such it had nothing shameful about it, even though Bismarck, a wildly prejudiced commentator on the events of the ’forty-eight, felt his hair stand on end with horror at the thought of a God-anointed monarch so humiliating himself before the mob! That the King shook with terror on that frosty night when, to the strains of the hymn *Jesus, meine Zuversicht*, he bared his head to the dead, raised

menacingly towards him upon their biers, as Freiligrath asserts in the most powerful polemic in all our literature, his imaginative appeal *From the Dead to the Living!*, is a fact that has never been substantiated; though it may well be that he looked pale, haggard, and worn after the excitements of those days, and that it was with no cheerful mien that he witnessed the whole ghastly and solemn ceremony. But Frederick William IV, though he had little taste for things military, was no coward. When a notoriety-mad petty burgomaster from Brandenburg attempted to assassinate him just outside his castle in Berlin, he remarked afterwards to the dismayed Queen, "What if he had killed me? My brother would have become King." Soft-hearted as he was, he even made a personal attempt, unsuccessfully indeed, to save the would-be murderer from the death penalty. He met subsequent attempts upon his life with a self-possession almost amounting to callousness, and once said jestingly that each murderer in uniform was followed by one in livery. It is a mere historical fairy-tale put about by servile Royalists that the King's inactivity during the March Rising in Berlin rendered him unpopular. The only people who objected at the time were his officers of the Guard, who, when he returned to Potsdam on March 25th, scarcely a week after the worst moments of the insurrection, and said in a speech that he had never been freer or safer than under the protection of his good townfold of Berlin, raised a jealous, conceited, and menacing hissing and groaning. Unfortunately the unmilitary Frederick William IV let himself be terrorized by the arrogant opposition of the military, and hastily added a few propitiatory excuses to the colours.

The truth is that the trust he brought himself for a time to put in his people—a rare procedure unfortunately with the Hohenzollerns!—was productive of nothing but good. His decision not to flee from his subjects but to stake his life on their fidelity saved the throne for himself and his

descendants down to the day that it was lost by his runaway great-nephew, William II. A year after the March Rising of the 'forty-eight the German people, through the "Frankfort Parliament," meeting in the Pauluskirche at Frankfort-on-Main, offered the Prussian King the Imperial crown, an honour that would never have been done to a known and acknowledged coward.

Frederick William IV, however, was not the man to accept this, the highest gift that it was within Germany's power to offer. His star, ever shrouded in the mists of medieval concepts, was too small, was not liberal enough, for such a destiny. In spite of his fortunate experience of his subjects' loyalty and faith, he never managed actually to love them; his cordiality remained a matter of phrases. To his shame be it said he would not receive the crown at the hands of his people; in his medieval brain was ingrained the notion that this crown, the crown of Otto, of the Hohenstaufens, and of the Habsburgs, should only be received from Germany's Princes. He "would not wear a crown dishonoured by the scoundrelism of the 'forty-eight," as he assured the deputation from the Pauluskirche, to him "unholy," which came to offer him the Imperial dignity. He refused to recognize the people's deputation as qualified for its mission. "You, here," he said haughtily, "you have nothing to offer! I will settle this matter with my peers." Whether or not it would have been easy, in view of the widespread popular demand, to effect a union between the German Princes, at that time more or less ripe for unity, Frederick William, as the devoted feudal vassal of Austria, did not even consider. The consequence was that the dream of a German Folk-Empire, the enthusiastic dream of such men as Uhland and Arndt, and even Humboldt, faded into nothingness. The dreamed-of Empire was to come—in Frederick William's sense—as the creation not of the people but of the Princes, in the year 1871; for the road to unity could only be found, said the

militarists and "*Realpolitiker*," the "practical politicians," by blood and iron; though in what sibyllic writing this piece of wisdom was inscribed not one of them could say.

After the 'forty-eight Frederick William's temperament darkened progressively, as his father's had done after 1830. He rejoiced with all his heart when in November 1848, six months after the street fighting, the military re-entered Berlin under the command of Wrangel, and placed the city in a state of siege, proclaiming that "the City Militia is disbanded. All Political Clubs and Societies are closed."

More reactionary than ever before, the King wrote to his intimate friend the English Ambassador, Bunsen, who had tried in vain for years to induce him to adopt the freer ideas of Western Europe, that "they wanted to put a dog-collar round the neck of the Prussian King, to chain him fast to the principle of the sovereignty of the people, to hold him in thralldom to the Revolution of the 'forty-eight. They have failed. After all, the truth is that only soldiers are any help against democrats."

The great popular movement of the 'forty-eight—in the King's subsequent opinion a most foolish and wicked affair—thus beat itself out miserably against a ruler's distrustful temperament, a mind dominated by ideas of feudalism and caste. Nevertheless, he permitted the Constitution, which he—bitter jest in the history of Prussia!—had "conceded" to his country, to stand. For this he was severely blamed by such of the extreme reactionaries as would fain have resumed rule by the knout, more especially by his brother-in-law Nicholas, the vilest of all the Czars, who earned a hundred times over the horrible death in the cellar which in our own days awaited his great-grandson, the last Czar. The King, however, could not forget how they had all crawled on their bellies before "His Majesty the Mob" during the reddest days of Berlin's terrible year, and all his life he retained a remnant of regard for the promises he had made at that time. Nevertheless, he inserted a clause

in his will directing that each of his successors should, before his coronation, have a secret document laid before him, conjuring him to abolish the Constitution (which in reality had been a "concession" not to the people but to *him*!). It was William II who first had this disgraceful document destroyed. And so the sole miserable result of those years of persistent popular clamour was this Constitution, cobbled and botched by Frederick William IV, which served Prussia from 1850 to the present day.

The King prided himself particularly on two of his inventions—that of the spiked helmet, and that of the "*Herrenhaus*," the Prussian House of Lords, both of which shortly proved deplorable to a degree, and made themselves universally obnoxious. His Prussian "*Landtag*" (Parliament)—a kind of popular salad mixed by himself after a recipe dictated by the favouritism of the heads of the Executive—was nothing to boast of, though we retained it till 1918. When his brother William, not a liberal-minded man God knows, remarked that the benches for the delegates to this "*Landtag*" seemed to have been made very narrow, Frederick William agreed with an impertinent laugh, adding that "the gentlemen were not to make themselves too broad, either."¹

With increasing years the King's increasing decrepitude became more and more patent to those about him. Although he had not actually succumbed to the consequences of the year of revolution like his reactionary brother-in-law, Louis I of Bavaria, who had formally abdicated while he of Prussia had only dallied with thoughts of abdication for a time, he carried the scars of those days to the grave. According to Ranke, the historian, who was summoned from time to time to keep him company, he was "like a man who had failed in a government examination." Melancholy as Hamlet, with whom he was often compared in those days, short-sighted and monocled, he would roam

1. "To make oneself broad" = "to give oneself airs."

about the rooms of Sanssouci where "*der alte Fritz*," his great-uncle, had once spread reverence, order, and terror about him with his crutch. Resembling even outwardly the Prince of Denmark, with his bloated figure, his big skull (his South German soldiers nicknamed him "Fat Head"), and his intellectual but flaccid features, the King, disillusioned by his times and by his people, fell deeper and deeper into a despondent, querulous state of pessimism. He had meant so well by his subjects, and now he was universally censured, discountenanced by nearly all! In his nervous excitability he took every adverse criticism, every mocking caricature, much more to heart than those who shot these arrows ever guessed. He felt the gathering threat of the dark powers of ruin and terror, and was often sunk in morbid depression. His wife, who was stronger and more resolute than the partner of her happy though childless marriage, did her best to support her husband as far as she could. When in moments of perplexity or despair he became lacrymose, forgot the requirements of breeding and convention, or raved wildly against the malice of Fate or of his subjects, she would let her gaze slide over him with the severe expression of a governess, pulling him up with the words, "I am looking for the King!" Even her love, however, could not endow him with the strength of backbone which was required of him. He was too unctuous, too emotional, too "rapturous," as his rougher brother William frequently told him, for the taste of the ruling, noble classes, while he continually lost popularity with the commonalty by the reactionary, sermon-like speeches, which, to his Ministers' distress, he would keep on tap for all occasions. After the 'forty-eight he had speedily taken a most mean and ignoble counsellor in Manteuffel ("Man-devil"), who in the opinion of the democratically-minded had one syllable too many in his name, and that the first! Radowitz, a man of hermit-like temperament, well-read and enthusiastic, the warlike monk, the Catholic Cagliostro of

the Prussian Court, the "coolly glowing" faithful Eckhart of the reign, was dropped by the King, not without a flood of emotional outpourings, as being too headlong and energetic. The "*olle Polte*" alone, "Mephistopheles" Leopold von Gerlach, succeeded to the last, by a mixture of cunning and bonhomie, in maintaining his influence and in cajoling many an important signature from his master. None the less, that dry and tough reactionary Manteuffel, surrounded by spies and choking the breath out of every hope of freedom, by an attitude of unvarying docility, supplanted in the King's confidence every other courtier, not excepting Count von Brandenburg, a bastard son of the libertine Frederick William II by the Countess Dönhoff, who, endowed with his father's cunning and complaisance, had ruled for a time as Minister for War in Prussia. It was this cancer of a Manteuffel who jockeyed the King, already in failing health, into the Pact of Olmütz, which, by the way, was by no means the fatality which it was later represented to be by the diehard Prussian party. In this Treaty the King (who with all his pride was a subordinate nature, liked to describe himself as "God's vassal," and would have forgone any of his titles rather than the meaningless appendix "by the Grace of God") put himself once more under the feudal overlordship of the Emperor of Austria. The exaggerated patriots of the east bank of the Elbe, who were as annoyed with him for this as they had been a year earlier for his swelling phrase that "Prussia should be merged in Germany," forgot that this ruler, who, like his contemporary Louis Philippe of France, hated war, was more concerned for peace with Austria than for the unity of Germany. Whether the necessary settlement between Prussia and Austria could have been better concluded by the methods of Sadowa than by those of Olmütz seems to us to-day very questionable. Uhland the poet, who in 1848 supported the principle of the homogeneity of German-Austria with Germany on

the ground of essential community of race, was right as against Bismarck, the man of force, who regulated these matters chiefly in relation to dynasties and not to nations.

The enthroned Romantic, who bowed before the ancient might of the Imperial House of Habsburg, whereas he had stood up defiantly against the sublime will of the people, showed increasingly plainly that he was not that great man and strong for which his era groaned in travail. Formerly he had shone, at least occasionally, with a somewhat pert wit, just as in childhood he had delighted his father by his free use of slang Berlin expressions that he had picked up on the parade ground when the troops were drilling. Many of his jokes have been preserved; witticisms at the expense of elderly ladies of the Court are prominent among them, and most have lost all savour. He could coin a phrase from time to time, but not a thought; as a rule his jests were chestnuts that he revived and recirculated. Now and then he produced a good jingle like that on Napoleon—“*Er fürstete Bürstenbinder und bürstete Fürstenkinder*” (“He made Princes of brush-makers and brushed away sons of Princes”)—happy ideas which were laughed at and admired enormously, but which do not betray any extraordinary brilliance. The taciturnity of Frederick William III, however, had made the expectations of the Prussian Court so modest that jests and puns of this sort from the Royal lips passed for witticisms of the first water.

Frederick William IV shows most attractively in his marriage, in which he was as chaste and faithful as any parson. It is true that he drew upon himself from his Royal brother-in-law, Louis of Bavaria, whom he had repeatedly reproached for his dissolute life, the following lampoon:

“The reproaches, Royal Brother,
You’re so gracious as to offer
Do not find their mark in me,
Leave me quite ungalled you see!

“Are my acts a scandal, then?
Princes are but mortal men,
Lola Montez do not blame,
When could *you* achieve the same?”

Whether the King who incurred this rebuke had contracted a venereal disease as a young man on the French campaign, as has been often asserted in explanation of his later illness, is a matter that could only be settled by the Court physicians; they, however, were sworn to secrecy, and are long since dead. In any case, he had a first stroke at Pillnitz Castle on the Elbe in the hot summer of 1857. He had gone there to stay with his Royal cousin John, the translator of Dante, with whom he was united by a common love of the Arts, in order to recover from the blow he had suffered in the loss of his beloved Neufchâtel. Neufchâtel in Switzerland, an outlying, senseless Prussian interposition in the Swiss Republic, which had been restored to Prussia at the Peace of Vienna, meant more to him than neighbouring Schleswig-Holstein with its long seacoast—for the sake, said the scoffers, of the excellent wine grown in the canton! Shortly after this first collapse the King lost his memory, and began to show signs of softening of the brain. His wife, his beloved helpmeet “Elis,” who had already advised him more than once to abdicate as her brother Louis had done, placed an enactment before him by which he made over the rule of Prussia to his brother William, much to the delight of her power-loving and ambitious sister-in-law, the future Empress Augusta. With that he stepped out of his epoch, an epoch which with its industry and factories (hitherto alien ideas, for which, significantly enough, no native words were found for the German man and woman to use) had long become quite incomprehensible to the medieval enthusiast. It was with him as with his dearly loved poet Pieck—inhabitant of an unreal world, who, when he visited the King in Potsdam, used to drive in his coach alongside the new railway to which he would not trust himself—

Frederick William IV with his darkling mind had run beside his era until it had far outstripped him. For some three years and three months longer he sickened, a living corpse, in Sanssouci, where his great ancestor had made a vigorous recovery from his first stroke. The poor monarch, crippled by his terrible illness, could scarcely be said to live. He could no longer enjoy, or even endure, the heavy tobacco smoking which had formerly been his frequent solace. Now and then he would have Thomas à Kempis's pious work, *The Imitation of Christ*, read aloud to him, but very soon he was unable to attend even to that.

When his brother William, now Prince Regent, visited him for the last time, he found the King breathing hard in a crumpled heap in his arm-chair, from which he was powerless to raise himself. On a desk beside him stood, as always and characteristically for this one-time king, three pictures—the Venus of Milo, Gellert and his brother-in-law “Nix,” and the Czar Nicholas of Russia—a remarkable collection, a strange museum! On the sick man's knee lay Bettina von Arnim's book—he had known the poetess and had once celebrated her as “sprung from the land of the grape, sun-baptized”—a book dedicated to the King, in which she sought in her ingenious, emotional way to solve the problems of the time and of the Workers through the mouth of Frau Aja, Goethe's mother. But the book lay upside-down; it was thus that the mad King had held it, pretending to read. The Queen, exhausted by the care of her senile patient, whose habits became increasingly trying, sat staring mournful and silent before her. The imbecile King smiled a last smile—it looked a mere lunatic grin—and said, “She is looking for the King, Willy. But she can only find a poor, poor weak old man!”

WILLIAM I

(1797-1888)

THE great popularity William I later enjoyed as an aged Emperor must not blind us to the fact that for the first ten years of his reign, or even longer, he was regarded with very great mistrust. In the eighteen-forties and fifties the folk in North and South Germany contemptuously nick-named him "*Der Kartätschenprinz*"—"The Grape-shot Prince"—because he it was who in the year of revolution had given his Royal brother the diehard advice to employ cannon and bombs against the people of Berlin. In the 'forty-eight the conduct of the Crown Prince of Prussia had been even less praiseworthy than that of his brother King Frederick William IV. There is no doubt that he then belonged to the party of firebrands and extremists surrounding the King, even though later, for the sake of his popularity, some of his worst offences were whitewashed. But the accusation that he gave the cavalry a signal to charge the mob by waving his handkerchief from the window of his Palace in Unter den Linden—the future famous "historical window"—falls to the ground, as from the place where the dragoons were stationed it was impossible to see the Palace at all! Still, many of his violent and ruthless expressions dating from the red year remain unrefuted, while facts speak loud against him—for the windows of his Palace, and no others, were stoned by the Berlin crowds, while the words "The property of the nation" were painted in huge letters on its walls, just as after the flight of Louis Philippe the bolder mob of Paris wrote on the Tuileries, "These lodgings are to let." The Prince was the only one of the Hohenzollern family who was forced at that time to leave Berlin and withdraw first to the Fortress of Spandau, then to the

Pfaueninsel, and finally to England. He had become so faint-hearted by then that he was within an ace of abdicating his claims of succession to the Prussian throne in favour of his seventeen-year-old son. It was not till he stood on English soil, to which one of the earliest steamships, the *John Bull*, had transported him, that he again breathed freely. Meanwhile the popular ill-feeling against him in Berlin continued, and his name was even struck out of the church prayers. The newspapers attacked him continuously, abusive placards hung at the street corners, while at the first word of his return a crowd of twelve thousand citizens assembled in the Tiergarten to make vociferous protest against the homecoming of this "bloodhound."

When he reappeared in Berlin in June of the same year and took his place in the new Prussian National "*Langtag*" as representative of the small electoral district of Wirsitz, the majority hissed him and remained ostentatiously seated as he entered in the hated uniform. The short speech that he, a self-proclaimed "sworn enemy" in his youth of the "impudent claims of the modern parliamentary spirit," read from the rostrum, was not calculated to incline the hearts of the extreme parliamentary left more kindly towards him. He declared bluntly that he had come back to make public profession of his loyal acceptance of the constitutional monarchy, the King having seen fit to institute this form of government. In South Germany especially he became even more unpopular in the 'forty-nine than in the 'forty-eight, when, as Commander-in-Chief of the united Prussian and Hessian troops, he suppressed the popular risings in the Palatinate and in Baden. The month-long siege and subsequent chastisement of the fortress of Rastatt, where the remnants of the champions of freedom, Karl Schurz among them, had sought refuge, did not redound to the credit of the future William I. The court-martial, which, under Prussian officers of his Staff, held sway when the bravely

defended town had at last been taken, has made the very name of "Prussian" a horror in those parts to this day. Most of the revolutionaries were sentenced out of hand to death by shooting and were executed by their own German brothers. A man temperamentally serene as Uhland, who raised his voice in vain against the insatiable assizes in Baden, writes, years afterwards: "I shudder with horror even now at the mere sound of the words 'martial law' and 'court-martial.'" Is it not, indeed, utterly horrible to modern ears to hear that "to disembarrass Prince William of Prussia, as heir-apparent, of the unpleasant necessity of rejecting the numberless petitions for mercy with which it was foreseen he would be overwhelmed, a General of his Army Corps was entrusted with the duty of refusing the petitions?" If, nevertheless, one such petition accidentally came under the eyes of the Prince, he could write such an answer as this upon it: "May Heaven assist you as mother of the condemned man to bear your hard fate with patience! He will do no more for you, as He has bestowed upon us the commission to execute His Will." Prussian brutality was such that even after 1874—that is to say, after Sedan—it vented itself, through a certain General von Gayl, on the corpses of revolutionaries executed by order of court-martial and buried in the fortress graves of Rastatt, for this inhuman Prussian plenipotentiary refused permission for the erection of a gravestone for victims of the Rastatt popular rising. The unforeseen consequence of this act was that a German poet got a memorial, for the stone was put up instead in Renchen in memory of Grimmelshausen, who had died there and who, in his *Simplizius*, had written a terrible *Mene, tekel* upon the Thirty Years War.

His punitive campaign in South Germany lost Prince William any remnants of regard among German Liberals, even though his brother decorated him with the Order "*Pour le mérite*" for his services. The Mayor of Coblenz,

where he resided for five years after the suppression of the South German risings as Military Governor of the Rhineland and Westphalia, warned him urgently against venturing into the streets of the town alone and unescorted. One thing, however, William had acquired from his flight to England and was never to lose—his personal modesty and diffidence. The Prussian Ambassador in London, Bunsen, was very much struck when the fugitive Prince, on his arrival, waived aside the higher seat which was being brought for him with the words: "Please let that be! We must practise humility now, for thrones are tottering."

The fact that Queen Victoria, reigning constitutionally, sat secure while the thrones of autocratic German Princes tottered beneath them no doubt gave the banished William furiously to think. He never afterwards relapsed into his youthful hatred of progress, he never ventured to lay a finger upon the Constitution his brother had decreed for Prussia, nor did he attempt to nullify it by one-sided constructions. Later, it was only with the very greatest difficulty that William could be persuaded to realize the dream of a German Empire—a medieval dream haunting several brains at that time—the dream of seeing German unity made manifest under the old Imperial insignia. He was the last Prussian King to crown himself in Königsberg, with all customary magnificence and with the solemn, autocratic words: "I receive this crown from the hand of God," afterwards proudly shaking the shining sword to all four quarters of Heaven (as in Menzel's huge picture); and after Sedan he stood out almost as stubbornly as his brother Frederick William had done against the acceptance of the German Imperial crown. "What is the use of a 'majority' to me?" he said, used as he was to look at everything from a military point of view; or, somewhat more sentimentally: "How can my Prussian heart bear to see the kingly title which has attained and accomplished so much give place to the title of 'Kaiser,' which for centuries

has been at enmity with Prussia?" The septuagenarian was filled with a dark foreboding, a foreboding that this new, supreme dignity might spell disaster to his dynasty. It was solely owing to the urgency of his ambitious son and to Bismarck's cautious, step-by-step handling of the whole "Kaiser" question, that William at length declared himself ready to subject his Prussian heart to the blow. To the last moment, however, he resisted, when Bismarck parenthetically informed him that his title would be not "Emperor of Germany" but "German Emperor." It cost fits of weeping (oddly enough tears came easily to this warrior King, as a legacy perhaps from his emotional mother—and outbursts of rage—"This new dignity does not flatter me in the least!") before "in morose emotion," as he writes to his wife Augusta, he allowed himself to be dragged to the scene in the Versailles Hall of Mirrors. "Only after long and earnest prayer to God," he writes in the same letter to his consort, "did I obtain self-command and strength to endure the pain of seeing the Prussian title sup-
planted." He had inquired assiduously beforehand if the invitations of all the German Princes lay there in black and white, so that there should not be any possible semblance of the proposition for the revival of the Empire and the Imperial throne having come from the Reichstag before coming from the Princes. On this point he was true brother to the caste-ridden Frederick William IV! He himself fixed the ceremonies at Versailles for January 18th, as being the very day on which, one hundred and seventy years before, his predecessor Frederick, son of the Great Elector, had crowned himself first King in Prussia at Königsberg. He chose his own place for the ceremony beneath an emblematic picture of Louis XIV, the "patron" of Brandenburg, the inscription on which particularly attracted him, "*Le Roi gouverne par lui-même.*" After the Proclamation—the old German word "*Kaiserausrufung*" was actually not used!—he ignored Bismarck, the spiritual

author of the whole solemnity (which had been purely military, by the Emperor's own wish), in the most wounding manner, and talked purposely and exclusively with his generals and officers to show how the whole business of being reborn as Emperor had bored him. "You cannot possibly form a dull and dreary enough picture of the banality with which this thousand-year-old dignity was revived!" complained the Crown Prince Frederick, writing to his wife about the stiff and spiritless procedure at Versailles.

As years went on William got used, nevertheless, to the new arrangements, particularly as Bismarck relieved him of the chief part of the work and of the whole disgusting annoyance of dealing with the Reichstag. The result was that as Emperor he could devote himself as zealously to military matters as he had done as King, and those were the things he chiefly cared about—infantry drill, field manœuvres, the training of one-year volunteers, disciplinary punishments and cavalry exercises, the enlistment of eligibles, and the use of company columns—in short, all the questions of which his pen treats in two thick volumes published later under the title of *Military Writings*. The Emperor's chief difficulty in later life was with his family. He felt increasingly the jealousy of his son, who was pining to expend his best years and powers on great and independent tasks. Curiously enough, however, the thought of abdication, with which, like his brother, he had played as a younger man, did not appear to occur to him in this connection. After all, it would have been in no way startling, rather very unreasonable and far from unsettling, if the old man (who like Goethe disliked being called an old man, or even an "old hero") had, on his eightieth, or, say, on his ninetieth, birthday, resigned the crown and the supreme authority in favour of the son who was thirsting for them, and had himself retired to enjoy a well-earned rest. William, however, like a staunch sentry, remained at his post, taking his discharge from none but Death himself.

He stuck to it with the tenacity that he demanded of his right-hand man, Bismarck, when the latter, either from anger or for some ulterior motive, threatened for the tenth or twentieth time to resign. "Are you going to leave me to make a fool of myself in my old age?" he wrote frankly to his Chancellor. "It is treason for you to leave me!"

The two had come so close together in old age that the chances of a difference of opinion between the eighty-year-old ruler and his almost seventy-year-old faithful servant were reduced to a minimum. They had passed side by side through the time of conflict during which they had ruled against the Prussian "*Landtag*" and without a budget—that is to say, unconstitutionally. They had been successful in three wars, and had suffered defeat only in the war with the Catholic Church, the so-called "*Kulturkampf*," "which we should have done better to avoid," as William affirmed afterwards. It was no wonder, then, that Emperor and Chancellor drew nearer and nearer together. "My husband has had to approve so many of this man's basenesses," said the Empress Augusta, Bismarck's arch-enemy, one day to her French reader (who later turned out to be a spy), "and he has signed so many mandates, disciplinary transfers, and threats, such as the July Ordinances and the law against Socialists with which his Chancellor has saddled him, that he can no more get free of him than of a bad conscience!"

William's great argument in Bismarck's favour as against the attacks of his wife and son was always the Chancellor's good luck. "It is always, '*Das Schwein hat Schwein*'" ("The pig has luck," *Schwein haben* being a figurative expression in German for having luck), groaned the Crown Prince many a time when he had ventured to kick against the pricks of Bismarckian decisions. William had long since crushed all open opposition out of a son past his first youth and well advanced in years of discretion. At the time of the Danzig troubles, when the Crown Prince had given public

expression, not violently but regretfully, to his disagreement with the fatal and autocratic methods of government employed by the King and his Premier, the jealous William's wrath at once rose high so that Bismarck himself had to calm him down. "Go gently to work with the lad Absalom!" he said. "Your Majesty should avoid any decision *ab irato*. Reasons of State alone must be decisive." William accordingly did not play the frenzied Frederick William I on this trivial occasion. He merely strictly forbade his son to solicit the favour of his people any further. "With fatherly love, but with Royal gravity, I will pardon what has occurred."

Unfortunately the persistent spirit of rivalry and envy which he cherished against his son somewhat clouds the image, otherwise so attractive, of a man whose better qualities of fine feeling and mannerliness shine in many a gracious act. But jealousy of his son's expanding personality was active in William I from the beginning of his reign to the end. When he ascended the throne at sixty-four years of age he came very near rejecting Bismarck through sheer envy and hatred of his heir. "There is nothing to be made of this Junker," said he, with a shrug of his shoulders, to Roon, who had recommended Bismarck; "he associates with my son!" It took long years of tactful wooing on the part of Bismarck, who probably often played off son against father, to convince old William that his Chancellor, if only from self-interest, must be more devoted to him than to his son, from whose future favours he could hardly hope for very much. When, after Hödel's attempted assassination, the octogenarian Emperor was forced to leave the business of government for a while in the hands of his "dearly beloved son" (whom he always addressed with the formal "*Sie*"), he said to his Ministers: "I require you, gentlemen, and I charge you most earnestly, to carry on the government entirely on my lines, so that everything may remain as it is."

The Emperor got on better with his imperious consort than with his only son. She had been the Princess Augusta of Saxe-Weimar, grand-daughter of Charles Augustus, and had been most warmly commended to him by his father to help to soothe the one and only great love sorrow of William's life. At the castle of his great-aunt, Louise von Radziwill, who was also the great-aunt of Ernst von Wildenbruch and had helped to mother his father, William had fallen in love with her beautiful young daughter, Elise. He had applied for the hand of the lovely ash-blond Princess and had been joyfully accepted, both by the lady and her parents. Frederick William III himself had just contracted a second marriage—a *morjennaatschiche* marriage, as Berlin slang has it, because those who marry in this way "*heute lachen und morjen naatschen*" ("laugh to-day and weep to-morrow"—a play upon the word "morganatic"). The old King now inquired whether his second son's projected marriage would be a union in accordance with his rank; for as his eldest son, his beloved Fritz, was apparently to have no children, Frederick William III began to grow anxious about dynastic heirs. The authorities replied that the Princess Radziwill's father not being a reigning Prince, her equality of birth must be considered doubtful; whereupon the King "called off" his son at once and advised him to look about for another bride; for Prince Anton Radziwill, an intellectual and artistic man, who had set appropriate music to Goethe's *Faust*, could scarcely be expected to give his blessing to a "*morjennaatschiche*" union between his daughter and the King's son. The letter William wrote his father upon receipt of this depressing news was first made public by Treitschke; it is a letter full of filial love, but also full of cold-blooded regard for the future welfare of his own person and that of his House. To his first issue of this letter, showing the submissive attitude of the Crown Prince William to Fate and to that ruthless monster the State, Treitschke appends the words: "Thus

the inscrutable wisdom of Providence raised up heroes for the Nation." William himself stood this providential arrangement somewhat better than the poor Princess Radziwill, who shortly afterwards died of it; it left him calm and resigned, but also with a considerable increase of piety which caused him to draw near to God in prayer far more frequently than heretofore. "I first experienced the full comfort of prayer in those days of sorrow which at first threatened to crush me," he wrote at the time to his most intimate friend, Oldwig von Natzmer. Rather less than six months later, it is true, he wrote to the same friend: "I have had a very pleasant time in Weimar, where the King has sent me—although there were moments that could not but be extremely painful, as I saw the ghost of a happiness I had lost some months since." Two years later he married the beautiful, seventeen-year-old Augusta of Weimar. This Princess, who was fourteen years his junior, showed, even as a girl, "a very firm and independent character," as Wilhelm von Humboldt, who made her acquaintance at Goethe's house, wrote to Berlin. His estimate was confirmed by her whole future life. Unfortunately the cultured Court of Weimar had given her a general love of the arts and of the humanitarian dreams of the classical writers rather than any special interest in things German. The education given to her by her mother, the Russian Princess Maria Paulowna, whom Goethe celebrated so often in verse, had been predominantly French, and Augusta, the future first Empress of Germany, retained all her life a weakness for French and a passion for having Parisian romances read aloud to her. Some of her musical compositions, in which she adapted herself to her husband's Prussian tastes, show that she had a streak of the artist in her, and she was responsible for a few military marches, which were at least more successful than her grandson's "*Sang an Ägir*." But her finest work came from her fervent interest in the care of sick and

wounded soldiers, and the gallant support she gave to Dunant's splendid efforts leading to the institution of the Red Cross at the Geneva Convention. With all her imperiousness and jealousy she was essentially peace-loving, and she hated Bismarck in part because she secretly attributed to him the guilt for the three terrible wars it was her lot to live through. As late as the 'seventies she still tried now and then to influence the Emperor, particularly when her adviser Schleinitz, who had failed as a politician and was now treasurer in the Royal household, had recently stirred her up to renewed enmity against Bismarck. Eventually she almost abandoned her attempts, realizing that the old man was determined to be led by his bad angel and by "Mephistopheles" Bismarck, though occasionally she would try to get hold of him at breakfast, the Chancellor being habitually a late riser. On each occasion when she was successful in influencing her spouse in this way, his faithful paladin, as he himself has described at length, would subsequently have a violent struggle with his lord.

Yet William was not quite so submissive to his Chancellor as outsiders were inclined to imagine. He carefully weighed almost everything the latter set before him before affixing his signature, while his gentle obstinacy often made the impatient and effervescent Bismarck break out, or break glass ornaments, in a passion of rage. No! The Emperor was by no means as completely under his Chancellor's heel as Augusta sometimes mockingly asserted. Even his very last signature, when he used the now famous words, "I have no time to be tired," was made at the price of an argument—if only, on this occasion, as to the form that signature should take, the Emperor being determined to write it out in full! In the most important questions, it is true, the Iron Chancellor was always able to convert the All-Highest to his point of view. This was so in the matter of the Diet of Princes at Frankfort in 1863, which Bismarck strenuously forbade the King (as he was then) to attend,

leaving us to-day to wonder whether a peaceable conference between the Princes might not have avoided the bloody struggles of 1866 with their fratricidal wars, and rendered it possible to achieve German unity in a simpler and more comprehensive fashion. It was so again after Sadowa, the decisive battle against Austria, when he advised William, now flushed with victory and anxious to pocket all the spoils possible, though he had previously been loath to enter into the struggle, to moderate his demands. In such moments of tension the two men, the Emperor and his Chancellor, wept in competition in the most remarkable fashion, till Bismarck, as the tougher of the two, gained the upper hand (or handkerchief!). After Sadowa, in the castle at Nikolsburg, the very one in which Napoleon had stayed after the Battle of Austerlitz, William, in a towering fury, wrote the following marginal comment upon one of Bismarck's memorials: "My Prime Minister having left me in the lurch in face of the enemy, I, being unable to replace him here and now, have discussed the matter with my son, and as he takes up the same attitude as the Prime Minister, I find myself compelled, to my bitter grief, after my army's brilliant victory, to bite into these sour apples and accept a shameful peace." As a matter of fact, by this "putrid peace" (which only the militarists had anything against, as, indeed, they have against every peace) he added a larger piece of territory to his kingdom than any of his predecessors had acquired, with the exception of the fat Frederick William. But the most important point was that Prussia, by absorbing Hanover and Hesse-Nassau, whose rulers William treated in no very gracious or cousinly fashion, became, for the first time, really synonymous with Germany.

In the last and bloodiest of his wars, also, that against Napoleon III and France, William's initial distaste for the "game of faro," into which he had been drawn, lessened very considerably as victory followed victory. Old memories

awoke in the seventy-three-year-old ruler, heroic memories of his youth, of the battles for freedom against the first Napoleon at Bar-sur-Aube and La Rothière, when in the service of his strict yet beloved father he had won the Iron Cross (distributed far less casually then than in the World War). From time to time he would torment his *entourage* about his would-be more exact knowledge of the locality between Maas and Seine, and had to be met with circumstantial arguments based on newer staff maps—another manifestation of his persistent, gentle obstinacy. The fortunes of war (which he called God's providence) accorded him Sedan, the greatest German victory over France since the Battle of Pavia. Like Charles V, William showed himself magnanimous and courteous towards his defeated opponents, and indeed throughout the campaign of 1870-1 a certain chivalry between the two contending nations is observable, a nobility of mind compared with which the brutalities and cruelties of 1914-18 are reminiscent of a low-down prize-fight. But the Emperor, as he now was, would listen to no nonsense about the somewhat hard peace conditions upon which Bismarck had, in the meantime, decided with his acquiescence; not even from his wife, to whom he wrote a very determined letter, the most forcible he ever addressed to her, warning her to abandon all superfluous sentimental feelings for the insolent enemy, who had well earned his unpleasant fate.

In spite of the mildness that clothed the old Emperor more becomingly than his ermine, he could be as hard as a diamond on occasions, which, in his opinion, required severity. This was particularly so in his enmity to everything savouring of Liberalism, on which subject he constantly found himself in amicable agreement with Bismarck. Liberalism to him was a matter of phrases only, and he was delighted to see his Prime Minister thundering against liberality of opinion and its still darker shadow,

Socialism. One has only to read, in the writings of Eugen Richter, Forckenbeck, Bamberger, Bebel, Virchow, Lassalle, Liebknecht, and others, by what methods, under the Emperor's protection, Bismarck strove with his opponents during the great political struggles of 1887 and 1888, and how he "influenced" the magistrates from above and encouraged a political spy system of the worst kind, to understand and sympathize with the unconquerable loathing those lovers of freedom felt for the "German Dictator." It was the fault of the suppression of Liberalism systematically undertaken by the first German Emperor and his Chancellor that William II, when he acceded to the throne, found a middle class which had degenerated into a non-politically minded race of serfs. On the other hand, the constant harsh repression of the Social Democrats, who, even under William I, increased in what Bismarck regarded as a most sinister manner, strengthened the Red party so that in the Revolution of 1918 it was able to take over the government of Germany. In consequence of his "Manchester School," his *laissez faire, laissez passer* attitude towards his Chancellor in most questions of domestic policy, William I unfortunately shares in the responsibility for Gladstone's annihilating verdict that "Bismarck has made Germany great but the Germans small."

The charm of the old Emperor's personality was not due, as was that of his grandson, to external glitter and an amazing talent for picking up surface acquaintance with a subject. The first William was, on the contrary, a "slow, unpretentious man." "He is simple, honest, and sensible, like his father," his mother, Queen Louise, said of him as a boy. From the first he was much easier to deal with than his unsteady, variable brother, Frederick William IV, who in his youth riveted all eyes on himself. Compared with Frederick William, people hardly noticed William, who, unlike his fluent brother, found public speaking and writing of all kinds difficult, having inherited something of

the clumsy tongue and pen of his father. He was naturally not regarded as a future King, and was educated, almost as a matter of course, for the one calling for which it was taken for granted a Hohenzollern *must* have aptitude—that of the soldier. “Officer?” he almost invariably inquired, when any upper middle-class man was presented to him. “In the most difficult situations I had only to seize him by the sword-hilt to get something done,” related Bismarck, who himself always appeared before the King in the uniform of the cuirassiers, having noticed that he got on with him better so than in a black coat.

For his later activities as ruler William, being only a second son, as he himself often complained later, was very meagrely prepared. Feeling his inadequacy keenly, he later did all he possibly could to make up what he lacked, devoting himself with really touching industry and unusual conscientiousness to the affairs of State that devolved upon him. His customary interruption of proceedings with “I beg your pardon. Will you please repeat that again? I should like to remember it,” became quite famous. Only a year before his death he complained to Bismarck that it looked as if his grandson William would probably have to enter upon his high office as untaught and far more inexperienced than himself. “I was made a member of the Ministry at a stroke. From the first I daily received political dispatches which, as the seals showed, had already passed through four or five or six pairs of hands.” In that sentence of the old man’s one can read the fury he must have felt in middle age when as an utterly uninstructed newcomer he was for a time obliged to have everything done for him by civil servants and “*Geheimräte*.” When Bismarck first got to know him, Prince William, as he still was at that time, did not know the difference between an “Orthodox” and a “Pietist,” and was glad to let Bismarck explain to him at length the relationship between the owners of estates and their peasants—facts with which every junior civil servant

was acquainted, and of which he, the future King of Prussia, had no knowledge whatever.

It is a very remarkable thing that this ruler, in spite of the one-sided military education given him from his tenth year onwards, had yet the will and the power during the last third of his life to devote himself to the government of his country, a work for which he had hitherto been all unprepared.

He was greatly assisted in his task by the modest spirit in which he approached it, a true modesty, which, unlike his grandson's, gained upon him year by year, and exercised a gracious influence upon the bearing of every subaltern who came in contact with him. Grace of manner he had certainly inherited from his beautiful mother, a courtesy which showed itself particularly in his chivalry to the female sex. "He could kiss one's hand as charmingly as any man," said his later mortal enemy, the Empress Eugenie. During the last years of his life a valet had always to accompany him, as the old gentleman easily stumbled or fell, but even at such moments, laughter-provoking under the formal circumstances, there was something very charming in the way he would excuse himself with a touching childlikeness on account of his advanced years. Even his economy—he might have been called "Oeconomous," like his forbear, John George—had something attractive about it. Always careful of his health, he would, when in Berlin, have hot water fetched for his baths from the Hôtel de Rome, which faced his own modest castle, as it was cheaper than constructing a special stove there for that purpose. As a rule he slept in a simple iron camp-bed, and he liked to cork the half-empty bottle of champagne at lunch and set it aside, despite its lost sparkle, for his evening's refreshment. The three fatal passions for drink, gaming, and smoking played no part in his grave, strict, and sober life. He had no touch of genius and had to depend entirely on hard work—at least he was no genius unless Schiller's dry thesis



EMPEROR WILLIAM I

After a photogravure by the Photographische Gesellschaft, Berlin

that genius is industry is the right one. He did his daily task as punctually as a good timepiece. When, just before one o'clock, the guard turned out in Unter den Linden, he broke off work for a moment, stepped to his famous corner window, bowed to the people, and rejoiced for a moment in the love of his subjects, which warmed him better than the sun. "And has lasted somewhat longer!" he liked to add, with a little smile. As one who had heard both "Hosannah" and "Crucify him," he inclined to caution before the demonstrations of the multitude. "If shouting would do the job," he wrote to his wife in the first days of war-fever in 1870, "we should be out of danger. But shouting alone will not do it." With his contemporary Richard Wagner, whose tempestuous works William did not understand and whose *Kaisermarsch* seemed to him an extravagant and swollen affair, this ruler might well have said that everything in his life had come twenty years too late. But instead of adopting, like the composer, a Schopenhauer-ish pessimism, the old Emperor gave himself up to the only possible optimism, the optimism Schiller had hailed as the one way out of the chaos of life—work, an industry that never wearies and never finds time to be tired. An occasional pleasant hour at the theatre listening to *Der Störenfried*, *Die Weise Dame*, *Der Trompeter von Säckingen*, or *Das Goldene Kreuz* was the favourite, almost the only, recreation of this lover of industry. With the exception of a yearly journey to take the baths, William worked indefatigably day after day till the morning of his death by the still light burning within him—that light which highbrows and quacks deride in vain—the sound common sense that led him securely as a child through the most involved problems of State and all the complicated traffic of the world.

In addition to that simplicity and genuineness which prevent any one of his countless portraits from appearing unnatural, forced, or affected, he was distinguished by another virtue none too frequent among princes—that of

loyalty. He tried to do well by everyone who was in any way bound to him or had deserved well of him, from the gardener, who had hidden him on the Pfaueninsel in the 'forty-eight, to his one and only Chancellor, all whose whims and abuse he patiently endured, and to the hot-tempered wife, whom he had married for reasons of State, but whom he had treated ever after with the highest respect and consideration. It is difficult to be certain now whether he really had as many love-affairs outside his marriage as the numerous children attributed to him, apart from his legitimate offspring, would lead us to suppose. In any case, it is a subject not worth discussing. In his letters to Augusta William he always signed himself "Your most faithful friend," and one can be certain that he was so. This man who, except in religious matters, was a man of few words, understood the meaning of truth and friendship. The last gaze of his failing eyes as he lay dying was for his Empress. Those eyes, when their expression was benevolent, could lend to his whole countenance an aspect of unearthly greatness which it was not by nature formed to wear. It was this loyalty and steadfastness which gave him that spiritual harmony in his old age that Bismarck's neither knew nor sought to know. "*La fermeté est presque le génie pour les princes*," is a saying the truth of which no ruler has shown so nobly as the first—one would almost like to say also the last—of the Hohenzollern Emperors.

Like a good wine, his nature became milder, riper, more friendly and lovable with the years. On each occasion, when his life was threatened by an assassin, up to the last and worst attempt of the Social Democrat Nobiling, he begged the spectators not to do violence to the criminal in their first moments of horrified excitement. He pardoned the assassins whenever he could, and would have spared even Nobiling if the latter had not turned his revolver against himself. He had, in fact, developed into the "benevolent lover of his kind" that his mother, Queen

Louise, would have liked to bring him up to be. Like his father, William early became a Freemason. As an old man he accepted the Grand Mastership and the patronage of all the lodges in Prussia, welcoming the cordial warmth of a bond of brotherhood that worked for the ennobling of mankind. Among the principles of conduct he wrote down for himself as a youth in 1815, after the final overthrow of Napoleon, the misanthropist, one runs: "I hold it a higher thing to be loved than to be feared"—the direct opposite of Caligula's notorious, "You may hate me if only you fear me." A few of the vows he made to himself on the threshold of manhood and of his majority are worth recording here. "Everyone who comes near me shall receive some good from me. I will always value those who have done me service. I will labour unceasingly to educate my mind and heart so that my worth as man and ruler may constantly increase. I will strive to be always cheerful and to hold far from all the things that can cloud the soul. I will endeavour by courtesy, serviceableness, and friendliness to win all hearts. I will never impose upon anyone by my princely rank, nor use it to oppress anyone, and when I have to demand anything of others I will endeavour to lighten the duty for them as far as I can. I will never suppose that I lower myself by a noble action."

No Hohenzollern before or after William I, with the exception of the one and only Fritz, ever spoke like that. These words alone would have earned him the right to good fortune and a long life of success and renown. The simple, natural old man smiled when people began to talk of him as a "great man." While he was alive, however, William did not need to take any very vigorous measures to guard himself against such meretricious halos. It was not till after his death that exaggerated glorifications of this sort were set on foot by the grandson who unfortunately resembled him so little—glorifications that would have annoyed his

"grandfather asleep in the Lord," all the more in that William II was pleased at the same time to degrade the reputation of his faithful helper and comrade in arms to that of a mere "drudge."

It is very doubtful if history will accord this ruler the surname of "the Great" that he refused for himself. What matters that to him or to us? We know to-day, to our sorrow, that in the moment of William I's passing Germany and Europe began to totter. Bismarck, who felt the distant threat to the stability of nations as a seismograph records earthquakes, expressed that opinion at the time. The German people will look back to William I as the Romans once looked back to the days of the Emperors Titus and Trajan, while every man who studies his personality and his achievements to-day will, notwithstanding all there is against him, bow the head before him in reverence. His was the greatness of simplicity!

FREDERICK III

(1831-1888)

The Kaiser has only to command, the Crown Prince can wish, merely.

(To Roon)

NEVER has any ruler suffered so cruelly as Frederick III under the martyrdom of an interminable heir-apparentship, an enforced waiting, a vain waiting, for the power that was not to be his until he was a dying and, worse still, a broken man. Only ninety-nine days of life—not so many as Napoleon was granted between his landing in France and Waterloo—remained to this unfortunate Hohenzollern when at last, a mortally stricken, almost a dumb man, the sceptre he could barely lift lay within his grasp. “After all, I cannot do away with myself to please my son!” the old Emperor would sigh at times to his wife, when he read in his only son’s face his impatience to govern the State. The Crown Princess Victoria, who almost excelled her mother-in-law Augusta in imperiousness, would sometimes jestingly pretend to have a bet on with her dear brother, waiting over there in England for the throne of a mother who did not do him the favour of dying till she was eighty-two years of age. “Take care, Edy, our old man will long out-live Mami! He’ll do it with his Bismarck’s help, our Methuselah, I can tell you!” Indeed, William I reached the almost legendary age of ninety-one, a record which his aforetime deadly enemy, Pope Leo XIII, afterwards beat by some two years.

All attempts to persuade the aged Emperor to abdicate were doomed to shipwreck—as the Crown Princess quite rightly recognized—against the determined opposition of Bismarck, who would have been quite willing to go on

ruling with the dead Emperor on his back, as is said to have been done in former days in China. But Augusta also, William's sturdy long-lived consort, had no notion of lifting the Imperial diadem from her white head before her hour struck, and on this one point—that the Emperor must remain Emperor to the last—she found herself for once in complete accord with the great statesman whom she detested.

As a result the old man continued, jointly with Bismarck, to wield the sceptre over Germany (which, to all intents and purposes, remained Prussia to him), and Frederick William, as he had been named after the late King, his godfather, was forced to go on waiting with what patience he could muster. For a very short time he and his wife, whose thirst for the supreme power was feverish, were able to draw freer breath when, following on Nobiling's attempt on the old Emperor's life in the summer of 1878, the Crown Prince took over the duties of government for his injured father. Yet the octogenarian's blood was all too healthy, and he soon recovered from the wound in his arm, which was the sole consequence of the attack. In fact, it seemed to those about him that the loss of blood had given the old man a fresh lease of life. The Crown Prince's vicegerency lasted a bare six months, and even so he was hampered and constrained by the Emperor's continual interference from the background. The imperishable old gentleman then once more took up the reins of government which Bismarck, relieved of the jealous pangs he had suffered during the Crown Prince's interregnum, gently replaced in his hands.

Once again the Crown Prince had to be content with the second place, to expend and exhaust himself on such duties as representing his father with the troops, or away in the provinces. The future Emperor Frederick III, however, took far less pleasure than did his eldest son, William II, in the dignity, magnificence, and solemnity of

ceremonious occasions of the kind. All the openings, unveilings, exhibitions, and consecrations, one essentially very much like another, of which his son in his time could never have enough, Frederick found wearisome and boring, the more so that he usually appeared merely as his father's representative. His tastes were too simple, he was too easy-going, too taciturn, and too awkward by nature for the task. At Frederick's christening in the New Palace in Potsdam, when the ancient golden baptismal ewer of the first Prussian King had been brought out, Bishop Eylert, a servile, despicable babbler, by Schleiermacher's account, preached a lengthy sermon, in addition to which the child's godfather, Frederick William the "Romantic" (who, as he said himself, felt bound to add a few words), pronounced a booming discourse, coming from the heart, no doubt, but less certainly going to the heart, and it is possible that the Crown Prince, obliged to let all this pass over his helpless head, contracted there and then a certain aversion for long speeches. In any case, he himself was always as brief as possible, and begged others, when duty required them to acclaim him orally, to be the same. "I wish I need only attend parades at army inspections, and be spared dinners, etc.," he would often sigh.

Moreover, a tendency to appear hobbledehoy and ill-dressed, which he shared with his godfather and uncle, prevented him from shining or feeling at ease on dignified occasions. Helmholtz observed with horror that at the learned discourses which he was forced to attend the Prince would sometimes fling himself impatiently on a table and sit there swinging his legs—an attitude which, in Helmholtz's opinion, was hardly becoming in the heir-apparent. Even more than his father, Frederick III was first and foremost a soldier, and a real, fighting soldier at that. Consequently the months he spent in the field in Schleswig, Bohemia, and France, where he carried out Moltke's plans and suggestions, were among the happiest

of his life, and he would long afterwards relive them with delight in his war diaries. When, as "our Fritz," he clinched the victory Moltke had planned by striking in at the right moment, winning a warrior's laurels and the highest military decorations, he was as pleased as Punch, and at the head of the victorious survivors of the fray joined in with his troops with all his heart as they bawled:—

"When William had talked with Moltke and Roone
He called to his side his heir and son,
'Go and wollop 'em, Fritz,' says he.
Prussia, Bavaria, Swabia too,
Follow Fritz without more ado
To Wörth, and wallop them heartily!
Drub them till the feathers fly,
And aching in every bone they cry
At the smart of our sturdy whacks;
Till, without pausing to draw breath,
They flee to Paris in fear of death
With us close upon their backs!"

He looked forward to the Autumn Manœuvres, which were held in those decades as the echo of past or the prelude to new campaigns and as hugh military dramas, with as much excitement as the huntsman awaits the beginning of the hunting season. After Sedan he devoted himself to the tasks of peace awaiting him in the German Empire with the best will in the world but not with the same heart-felt enthusiasm. He found it very much more difficult to get on with scholars, artists, research-workers, and men of commerce or industry than with soldiers, with whom his jolly, unconstrained manners always went down well. With his short tobacco-pipe, its gaily painted china bowl inscribed with verses from some street-song, with his winning if somewhat dumpy appearance, his bristling, soldierly grey beard, his direct, blunt manners, he was the first Prussian to be liked, even to become widely popular, among the Bavarians, when in 1870 his cousin, King Louis II of Bavaria, who detested war and never wanted to

set eyes on a soldier, placed his troops under his command. None the less, in 1871 the Crown Prince became patron of the Royal Museum in Berlin, to please his English wife, who liked to dabble in the Fine Arts, and at once took the enrichment of the collections vigorously in hand. He saw that the German excavations in Olympia were carried on and that good men were sent out there. All this was probably due to the influence of his former tutor, the antiquary, Ernst Curtius, who had accompanied the young Prince at the University of Bonn. Curtius had done much good work as an excavator at Olympia, and now, having come to an agreement with the Greek Government which was not very favourable to Germany, he succeeded, through the Crown Prince, in getting nearly a million out of the Reichstag to carry on the excavations there.

Frederick's other activities as patron of the Arts and Sciences were probably principally designed to win the admiration of his beloved "Vicky." This able lady was accustomed, owing to the example of her mother Queen Victoria, to a strong matriarchal government in her childhood's home, and she speedily obtained such power over her essentially soft-hearted husband as to cause some amusement throughout Germany. It was later due to her strong ascendancy over her mild husband that, when his throat trouble was diagnosed as cancer, surgical measures were postponed and his tragic death followed so speedily.

Victoria was the eldest daughter of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of Coburg, whose marriage was arranged by Stockmar, the English Queen's favourite at that time. The Prince Consort was a handsome bearded man, whom the ladies found charming, and who stepped forward with graceful alacrity when Victoria's choice eventually fell on him. From the first he found everything in his new island in the north "very interesting." Endowed with the superficiality appropriate to the average British monarch, Albert gained increasingly the confidence of the English, who were

puzzled at first as to how to fill up his days for him. He allowed his exalted wife to rule him, while at Windsor, in the Isle of Wight, or the castle at Balmoral he enjoyed the peaceful pleasures of a family circle which increased punctually year by year. The Prince Consort proved his worth as originator of the first great world exhibition in London, which afforded the people of Europe an opportunity of meeting together. At the very same time Rauch's monument to Frederick the Great was unveiled in Berlin in Unter den Linden with a pomp that was purely military, while the authorities rejected the idea of a Schiller memorial for Prussia's capital because that poet had shown in his *William Tell* that his sympathies were too democratic!

Vicky, accustomed from childhood to hear her mother speak and her father obey, at once introduced the same order of things into her new home. Again, like her mother, she kept her husband so well employed that he had neither inclination nor energy to devote to the adventures and escapades his great-grandfather of blessed memory had enjoyed in such full measure. His marriage had been arranged chiefly by his godfather, King Frederick William IV, who, oddly enough, was strongly drawn to England, little though this freedom-loving people could really meet with his approval. Probably this was largely due to chivalrous enthusiasm on the Royal Romantic's part for the young and blooming Queen on Britain's throne, for his somewhat sentimental friend, the ambassador Bunsen, had succeeded in prejudicing him very strongly in her favour. It was this same Anglophil who later drew the King's attention to the growing Princess Victoria's personal beauty and attractions, attempting through this union to repair somewhat the disadvantageous bargains he had made with British statesmen.

King Frederick William IV and his Queen Elizabeth, childless themselves, had established an almost parental

relationship with little Frederick William. Queen Elizabeth in particular was a veritable second mother to the boy, and devoted herself to him even more than his real mother Augusta, who a few years later had a daughter, the future Grand Duchess of Baden, to play with and to educate. But Frederick William IV himself, the family godfather—for the English Queen's son, the future Edward VII, dreaded in Germany as "the Isolator," was another of his god-children—also took very cordially to the frank youngster. He it was who later saw that the Prince was sent to the University of Bonn (though only as a non-resident student), and at his nephew's solemn instalment in the Chapter of the Order of the Black Eagle the King made one of his most unctuous speeches, drawing tears from all eyes.

Frederick William IV, much as he had looked forward to the romantic occasion, was unable to be present at the wedding of his beloved nephew in the chapel of St. James's Palace, London, where Henry VIII had married Anne Boleyn. By that time his mind was already failing, although Manteuffel still obstinately denied it. "Our sweet flower," wrote Queen Victoria in her diary on the evening of her daughter's marriage, "looked so charming and touching with her innocent, confident, grave glances!" In Berlin there followed at once the ceremony of the solemn reception of the English Princess into the Hohenzollern family, celebrated by a grand ball in the "White Hall" of the Castle. "It was all very fine, very proper and correct," wrote the young bride to her mother, "but rather stiff and military." Even at that time the relations between father and son were less cordial than those between uncle and nephew had been. Between William I and Frederick William, the Crown Prince, there was a lack of communicativeness that disconcerted even Bismarck. Lack of sympathy between father and son, suspicion between the reigning monarch and his successor, rendering a proper

understanding between the generations impossible, has ever been an unfortunate trait in the Hohenzollern family. Rarely have the two parties, the present and future Kings of Prussia, made an effort to comprehend each other or to lighten one another's tasks. The skinflint Frederick William I, father of Frederick the Great, may almost be called an exception, for when he had somewhat overcome his violent aversion to the offspring who was so utterly unlike himself, he did at least endeavour to give the "not unintelligent rascal" as good a training as possible for the station he was to occupy.

Between William I and the son who waited so long and in the end so fruitlessly for his father's death there had always been a constraint that developed later into dumb enmity and extreme irascibility on the part of each where the other was concerned. Things went so far that in December 1887, less than a year before the death of his son, then already doomed and suffering from a mortal disease, the old Emperor wrote the following letter to Bismarck, who now, believing that the Emperor's twenty-eight-year-old grandson, Prince William, would certainly shortly accede to the throne, wished to initiate the young man into affairs of State: "You know, of course, that this proposal, very natural in itself, has greatly annoyed my son the Crown Prince, as if people in Berlin were already thinking of replacing him. He must certainly not be subjected to this irritation again. Only in the *most* exceptional circumstances should my grandson be allowed to inform himself of affairs at the Foreign Office." Only in *most* exceptional circumstances!—the words are worth repeating in view of their tremendous consequences.

The doomed Crown Prince, obliged to halt at Portofino on his way to the Villa Zirio in San Remo, the last station on his way of sorrows, had indeed written thence to Bismarck in great anger, complaining of his eldest son's interference in affairs of State, more particularly in foreign

affairs. The letter contains charges against his son, such as: "His in any case very rash and over-hasty judgment—his defective knowledge," etc.—charges repeated in harsher form elsewhere.

It is not difficult to "feel oneself into" the weary, failing heart of the man, the proud victor of Weissenburg and Worth, everlastingly a mere Crown Prince. He had waited in vain, year in year out, for the death of his tough old father, and was now nearly sixty years of age. And now, thanks to this final weakness of the old Emperor, whose death was at last imminent, and because of his own incurable disease, the son he cared for so little was to grasp the sceptre, like Frederick the Great, in the flower of his youth!—was to seize overnight, as it were, the crown and all the Imperial insignia he had hankered after for decades!

The Crown Prince Frederick was as zealous in favour of the new Imperial idea as William, who would have preferred to remain simply King of Prussia, had at first been antagonistic to it. From the moment of the ceremony in the Versailles Hall of Mirrors, the future Frederick III thirsted feverishly for the Imperial crown. Like his godfather, he loved to dwell on the days of the Salians, the Ottos and the Hohenstaufens, and he would get Gustav Freitag, who was at his headquarters all through the war of the 'seventies, to tell him by word of mouth, as well as in his writings, tales of those centuries when the sceptre of the Holy Roman Emperors of Germany had dominated the West. When visiting place of historical interest he would always first order any coins, seals, or parchments of the German Emperors to be shown him, and would study their State documents almost as attentively as battle plans. All the time he would talk of the acts, the documents, the coins he would himself promulgate or have minted when he was Emperor. His future historiographer, the Hamburger Geffcken, a jurist as stiff as a poker, his "Alcuin," as the Prince would call him playfully, after Charlemagne's

counsellor and privy-secretary, received orders three years before the death of the old Emperor, when the Crown Prince, in view of the beginnings of his serious illness, could hardly hope to accedè to the throne, to draw up a proclamation to his people, a proclamation Frederick actually used when he did at last hold the sceptre. Numberless times the Crown Prince's hand, often quite involuntarily, would sketch a sceptre or some other symbol of the Imperial dignity on the margins of memorials or on army lists. There still exist his own designs for his banner, for his new Imperial crown, and for that of his consort.

It can hardly be supposed that the Crown Prince and his wife (still only "Vicky," the little Victoria, and never, so it seemed, to be the great Victoria, the Empress) really concentrated all their animosity on Bismarck as their son William has tried to make out. The Hohenzollerns' majordomo stood far less in their way than the irremovable old Emperor himself; if they detested his most faithful servant it was simply because he appeared to inspire that imperishable old man with ever renewed strength and youthful confidence, carrying him like a modern St. Christopher over the rolling stream of time. Bismarck himself, in his *Reflections and Reminiscences*, lays stress on the fact that his relations with Frederick III were good from the latter's seventeenth year onwards, and that during the ninety-nine days of his short reign they never had a serious difference of opinion or even a moment of friction. William II himself observed later with very great astonishment that his mother, even as Dowager Empress, got on excellently with the old Chancellor, and that they both obviously took a fiendish delight in exchanging their personal and considered judgments upon the ruling Kaiser.

The traditions of his dynasty and his own character make it very doubtful if Frederick III, had he reigned longer as Emperor, would really have proved the first liberal-minded and constitutional Hohenzollern ruler. His

wife's liberal views had been imported from across the Channel labelled, "Made in England," and, as foreign plants, never acclimatized themselves to the dry, sandy soil of the Mark. Whether "Vicky," as Victoria, Empress of Germany, and, let it not be forgotten, Queen of Prussia, would have had either the strength or the desire to let in light and fresh air, like an Ibsen heroine, upon the stuffy atmosphere of the Prussian Court and Constitution, seems as questionable as whether Frederick III would have become increasingly democratic beneath the splendours of the Imperial diadem. Probably Victoria, like her mother, would have become less and less "Whiggish" and more and more caste-proud with the years, particularly as she shared with her eldest son, whom in other respects she early found insupportable, a strong craving for homage and admiration. But it would, in the nature of things, have been better for all Germany if Frederick III and his consort had had a longer time to wield the power for which they had yearned, thus forming an historical connecting-link between old William's dignity and young William's youthful levity. This even William II himself has been constrained to admit in the confessions he has since published as a dethroned and banished man. The mere fact that in Frederick III a Hohenzollern not entirely taken up with out-of-date conceptions of Feudalism and Junkerdom would have held sway for a time, must have modified Prussia's and Germany's future and her position in the comity of nations. Through his cordial relations with Freemasonry, to which he was even more devoted than his father (whereas his son always kept his distance from that greatly-aspiring movement without the least comprehension of its meaning), Frederick III was influenced by big, West-European ideas. He devoted many an evening to the work of the lodges, and revelled with like-minded Masons in lofty dreams of humanity and the brotherhood of the peoples, with all the enthusiasm his son expended later on

pews and chancel steps. Again, the fact that Frederick was a regular reader of the *Volkszeitung*, then considered of the extreme Left, remarking "What the Government thinks, I know. I intend to know what the others think!" spoke well for the chances of a more liberal regime under his sceptre.

When the event for which the simple-minded and pious Crown Prince had prayed so often and so fervently at last occurred and Frederick III held in his hand the longed-for insignia, the orb, the book of the Gospels, and the Imperial sword, he was too exhausted to rejoice. He was like the runner who collapses fainting at the goal he has striven for so hard. He could not even go through with the historical crowning of a Prussian King at Königsberg which he had discussed with such interest with Menzel, after the latter had recorded that event in William I's career in a giant painting; he was deprived even of that "dress rehearsal" for the Imperial coronation he would have liked to celebrate, clad in the golden coronation mantle, in the Minster of Aix-la-Chapelle, seated on Charlemagne's marble throne above Charlemagne's grave. Death-doomed as he was, he was obliged to spare himself, as far as possible, every mental or physical exertion. But he could assume the proud title of "Emperor Frederick III," which he had chosen for himself, and take his place in German history as the successor of Frederick the Great of Prussia and of the most brilliant of all the Hohenstaufen Emperors, the mighty Frederick II. He intended his reign over the German Empire to be linked directly with that of the powerful and talented medieval Emperor, passing over the former insignificant Frederick III, who had reigned for the most part in chains, and the mediocre Frederick IV, the worst of the bad Habsburg rulers. He desired to bridge the gulf of time back to the proud era of the Hohenstaufens, before whom the world had trembled. So, for once, he wrapped himself in the coronation robes as



EMPEROR FREDERICK III

After a photograph by the Photographische Gesellschaft, Berlin

"His Majesty Frederick III," in the presence of the German Princes and the representatives of the three free cities of the Hansa, and for a few days greedily savoured the power that at length was his. *Imperator Germaniae!* His wife had so often practised before her mirror the proud bearing of a crowned Empress that the attitude was familiar and came to her now quite naturally. "Vicky," after all, had blossomed into *Victoria regia*, and, like her mother, could call herself "Empress." Her delight over the fulfilment of her wish was so great that for a few days she seemed actually to bear up her mortally stricken husband. A semblance of his old elasticity returned to him when he came back from the South to settle in the castle of Charlottenburg, where the philosophical Queen of Prussia, Sophia Charlotte, had once held her agreeable revels. He even had himself regularly dressed in the uniform that had been too irksome for him to wear in San Remo.

But it soon became apparent that this was a mere delusive, morbid flickering of the flame of life. After a few weeks he relapsed into a condition in which all questions of earthly apparel began to become a matter of indifference. The whisper which had hitherto served him with those immediately about him became unintelligible to all but his wife. As with the deaf Beethoven, slips of paper became his only means of communication with the outside world. The artificial administration of nourishment to the Emperor, dying of cancer of the throat, became ever more difficult and more painful to the patient. When the plans for the rebuilding of Berlin Cathedral, Schinkel's unfortunate and unfinished enterprise, which were destined to be carried out in monstrous changling form between 1894 and 1905, were laid before him, Frederick's hand made a few hasty dashes across the block of paper lying before him. As those standing round saw with horror, his eyes became strangely suffused with blood, he made a last stroke across the blank paper, and then scrawled, in the handwriting

that had once been so beautiful, so straight and strong, a few shaky, scarcely legible words: "That is all over and done with!"

There was to be no more building, no more carrying out of plans for him. He could only scheme and project. It is possible that, had his reign lasted longer, he might have devoted his energies to his residential city Berlin and to the supervision of its changing aspect, as Napoleon III, whom even Bismarck described as one of France's best rulers, had done so excellently for the Paris of his day. It is true that by the 'eighties the new Berlin, with its new dreary streets, its monstrous houses, disproportionately overloaded with stucco and decorations, had already begun to take shape without one single reigning Hohenzollern having ever troubled his head about the expansion of his capital. That exalted House continued to allow their capital city, their principal residence, to be disgraced through its architecture, as if Berlin had been somewhere in Barbary and not on the Spree, as if the whole matter were no concern of theirs. Nevertheless, Frederick III, during the long years as Crown Prince when he might represent but not rule, had come to adopt an attitude of respect for art, of which he was considered, at least formally, a patron. He had gradually come to see that art and artists cannot be ordered about as simply as a troop of soldiers. Still less would he have dared, as his son only too often had the boldness to do, to talk disparagingly of his architects' plans, his painters' pictures, his poets' works, or to attempt to improve upon them. He had an appealing friendliness and modesty in intercourse with artists, as such various types of men as Angeli, Anton von Werner, Bleibtreu, Spielhagen, Claus Groth, Lepsius, Menzel, and others have unanimously assured us. It is true that his mild interest in the Fine Arts and their creators was little more than superficial. When Louis II of Bavaria spoke to him enthusiastically in Munich of the sweet intoxicating poison of Richard Wagner's magic tones, the

German Prince was chiefly interested to inquire if the music would be suitable for a military band.

His essential strength lay in his sense of what was seemly, combined with his well-bred reserve in matters of the mind and heart. It was because these qualities were the very ones chiefly lacking in his eldest son that he did not care greatly for him, and said on more than one occasion that his second son Henry was his favourite. He was agreed on this point with his wife, who with him had grieved deeply for the early death of two splendid boys, and she would sometimes seriously discuss with her husband whether the Crown Prince, the future William II, ought to be proclaimed heir-apparent in view of his short arm and feeble left hand.

A sense of dignity, a certain reserve which kept him from being too easily and grossly familiar with his equals—again in contrast to his eldest son—won for this Emperor the genuine affection of his Royal peers. In spite of differences he was on the best of footings with his brother-in-law, Edward of England. Alphonso of Spain liked him, as did also Humbert of Italy and Oscar of Sweden, because they all felt that here was an unaffected, unpretentious man who could talk frankly with them on the basis of a common humanity without trying to give them advice or preach them moral sermons. His detailed correspondence with his cousin, the able King Charles of Rumania, has been preserved in full, and contains not one single unfavourable criticism of that Hohenzollern's new fatherland, at that time a little-known or considered country, and not a single instruction as to conduct for a younger cousin and a tyro in the profession. Moreover, when his close friend, George von Meiningen, the "theatre Duke," decided on an unequal match with an actress, "his dear Fritz" did not offer him the shadow of a reproof. The dying Frederick's last wish, whispered to his wife, was "Get Albert to come again, I should so like to hear him laugh

once more." He was speaking of Albert, King of Saxony. A man who gets on so well with his equals is likely to know how to handle all with whom he comes in contact; and as a matter of fact he was, without any doubt, the best beloved by the people of all three Hohenzollern Emperors.

In consequence of the subservient and cringing spirit already obtruding upon the Court of Berlin as it had once done in Byzantium, there were times even with him when he would play on his *entourage* the kind of tricks that later were to become the order of the day under his son, if the accounts of the latter's parasites and Poloniuses are to be trusted. He was capable of making a fool of one or other of his Generals or courtiers without quite realizing these people's defenceless position as against him, and he would become ungracious and morose in the highest degree if a man he had teased in this manner attempted to pay him back in kind. Still, such discourteous behaviour was rare with him, more particularly during his long illness, when most men are inclined to be moody, impatient, and ill-tempered; then, as all those who had to do with him testify, he showed himself amazingly gentle, courageous, and manly.

The operation advised by the German doctors as early as the spring of 1887 was not performed because it would inevitably have caused permanent injury to his voice. Bergmann, the best surgeon in Germany in those days, was obliged to admit this from the first. He frankly stated that after the removal of the tumour on the left vocal cord, diagnosed by him as cancerous, though the right vocal cord would remain, the voice would be hoarse and rough but sufficiently intelligible. This declaration probably induced the sick Crown Prince to give ear to his wife and her devoted English doctor Mackenzie, who said that a major operation was quite unnecessary, and that with proper treatment and care of the throat in the mountain air of Scotland or the Tyrol, or in the warm climate of the

Riviera, the hoarseness would vanish and the perpetual slight pain in the throat soon cease. It is clear that Frederick desired to appear before his people with his full, ringing voice when some day they should acclaim him their *Imperator*. The consequence was that he allowed himself to be talked into waiting and put off the necessary operation in favour of cauterizing and paintings, which he bore with angelic patience, until it was too late. Whether Mackenzie (who seemed to the German people at the time the Evil One himself), when he did eventually resort to the knife, really made a mistake and operated upon the wrong side of the tormented patient's throat, is a doctors' quarrel that it would be difficult to settle so long after the event. The result would matter little in view of what followed—the ninety-nine-day Emperor's terrible death, after a period of suffering during which the evil smell of the tumour's discharge alone rendered life intolerable to the patient. The growths in the throat increased, artificial nourishment with milk was resorted to by the introduction of a flexible tube into the oesophagus, until at last the poor tortured man's heart could stand no more and ceased to beat.

He, who had sought to link his reign with that of the Hohenstaufens, saw himself the helpless victim of the doctors and of a mortal disease, a victim who could at most exhibit an Imperial bearing in patience, not in power—"learn to suffer without complaining." He had longed to mount a further rung of the ladder of German world-dominion, and he had to be content with the victory and witness of the passive, not active, heroism, which his advancing sickness required of him day by day. The last time he went out was to visit the mausoleum, not far from his castle, in the park of Charlottenburg. He lingered long before his father's newly closed stone tomb. It must have been a terrible and tragic wordless conversation that he held there with the father who had only resigned the sceptre to him when he was almost past valuing it!

"Afterwards he left the spot, deeply melancholy and very weary," announces a Court chronicler of the day, without an inkling of the tragedy that had culminated with this last visit of a sick son to a dead father. A fortnight later Frederick III, the "shadow Emperor," followed his predecessor into the kingdom of darkness, having expressly ordered that he should not be buried in the mausoleum but in the Friedenskirche in his beloved Potsdam—that is, in the place where rested his uncle and aunt, Frederick William IV and his Queen, his loved and honoured "vice-parents," as they had liked to hear him call them. His mother, the aged Augusta, who outlived her son by six months, heard the tragic news of the sick Emperor's death from his wife Victoria in the following words: "For your only son there weeps one who was so proud, so happy to be his wife—with you, poor mother! No mother ever had such a son! Be strong and proud in your grief! He sent you his greetings early this morning.—Victoria." The writer of those lines afterwards sought comfort for the sorrow and horror she had lived through in the arms of a handsome Court chamberlain. For twenty-four hours before the Emperor's death the castle in which he lay had been surrounded with troops, by order of his son as heir to the throne. Hour by hour the troops were marched nearer, till at last, advancing at the double, they were so disposed that no one could enter or leave the castle. Even the park was closed and occupied by the military, and no one could enter or leave the place where Frederick lay dying without a permit from the new ruler's chief adjutant.

William II thus took possession of his throne as if his dead father were an enemy to be guarded against. For days the coffin in which the dead man lay in full uniform stood, like a chest of workman's tools, amidst the hammering of the carpenters, who were busy decking the mourning chapel with its black hangings. The burial followed as hurriedly and with as little ceremony as might be.

When Frederick III was received into his appropriate heaven, where, according to their Court chaplains, German Emperors find a region especially and exclusively reserved for them, his first wish was to find his brother in the profession, Frederick II, the most powerful of the Hohenstaufens, whose brows had been adorned by no less than six diadems—the Roman Imperial crown, the German Royal crown, the iron crown of Lombardy, and the crowns of Burgundy, Sicily, and Jerusalem. Frederick III searched face after face, seeking the mighty ruler who had crowned himself in the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Zion, on the very spot that he himself had glimpsed as a travelling Crown Prince, a mere passing tourist, not as a conqueror. Nothing thrilled him so much as the idea of meeting the great monarch, who, as he had often read aloud to Vicky, had protected the citizens against the priesthood and had united loving benevolence towards his subjects with an Imperial severity of bearing. But Frederick II was not to be found in the region set apart for German Emperors; he was seated in Mohammed's Seventh Heaven, discoursing in Arabic with the Prophet on the absurdity of the historians and other servile souls, who maintain that there is a vast difference between an Emperor and a man.

WILLIAM II

(1859-1918)

IN the not insignificant matter of religious instruction (to take that branch alone), the education of William, last Emperor, at least for the time being, of Germany, was about as insensate a process as may well be conceived. The man mainly responsible for the boy's upbringing was one "*Geheimrat*" Hinzpeter, the trusty Eckhart of the future Emperor's youth, a Westphalian by birth, a Calvinist, intellectually stultified. Like many another tutor in the Hohenzollern family, he did very well for himself and actually reached the House of Lords. In the sketch of his former pupil, which he claims in his own words to have "drawn from the life," he tells us that "the Prince was for some time instructed in Church doctrine by a clergyman of liberal views, and subsequently, following a sudden change, by one strictly orthodox." "The confusion of ideas that might consequently have been feared," continues Hinzpeter (an "impudent toady," in Bismarck's estimation, who later idolized his Prince much as Niebuhr had done Frederick William IV), "the spiritual confusion, did not, as a matter of fact, ensue. With the characteristic capacity of a mind which could not be led into error for selecting from the material presented to it only that which was congruent with itself, the Prince, by his own efforts, built up the religious conceptions by which he was guided." In this piece of stupid flattery Hinzpeter betrays an appalling ignorance of educational problems, and quite clearly has no conception of the dangerous and permanent effects of such a see-saw policy upon the youthful mind, more particularly in matters of belief.

It is plain that it was his mother, bringing more liberal

ideas with her from England, who was responsible for the broader-minded beginning of her son's education, and that later the narrower dogmatic influences of the Prussian Court began to assert themselves so that, following a "sudden change," the second bigoted period of the boy's upbringing began. The new religious instructor was brilliantly successful in exterminating any such more liberal ideas as may have been lightly engrafted upon the Prince, but had not yet "struck." As a result the child's soul was tainted with Pharisaism, with that pietistic arrogance that puts itself on terms of familiarity with the Almighty, and which struck astonishingly deep root in William's belief in Revelation—an arrogance mocking with conscious superiority the superficial heresies of modern times, and regarding itself as a chosen instrument in the hand of the Most High. With William II's accession the pietistic strain in the Hohenzollern blood which had lain practically dormant since Frederick William IV's mind had become clouded, reawoke with redoubled strength. The old Emperor William I had, it is true, been a pious God-fearing man, but he had been moderate in this matter as in all, a humble Christian, well aware, to put it in his great-grandfather Frederick William I's forcible words, that he was only a "damned sinful vassal of God." Frederick III, the dying Emperor, was an active Freemason and therefore none too devoted to priestcraft, and he travelled his terrible way of sorrows a free man and a courageous, without spiritual consolations. Now, however, piety incarnate sat once again upon the throne of the Hohenzollerns, and very soon, as old Fontane complained, the bells were set a-ringing in every steeple in Berlin. If Frederick the Great could have heard his great-great-great-great-nephew's many pious utterances, particularly those on the subject of "Revelation" made to Admiral Hollman, his principal spiritual adviser, he would have held his sides for laughing at his successor's priest-ridden, childish reading of world history

as a process worked out by the Almighty in a spirit of "mingled fatherly love and self-interest."

The first occasion of friction between the young Emperor and Bismarck, whom, so he tells us, he had idolized hitherto, arose on this very question of belief. The apple of discord was one Stocker, a Court chaplain with "really something of Luther about him," as the Emperor considered, whereas Bismarck had thought fit to warn him against this inflammatory home-missioner, a political charlatan with little in common with Luther save the rancour with which he abused his opponents. How little the loyalty of the Emperor to the preacher he had begun by rating so highly was worth appeared later, when he dismissed him from his office almost at the same time that he did Bismarck. As time went on William's piety, encouraged by his wife, whose upbringing had been almost cloistral, became more and more pronounced. Church-building, which had abated somewhat during the last few decades, was now revived, despite the fact that there appeared to be hardly anybody left who had any idea how to build a proper church, whether Catholic or Evangelical. The half-ruinous Cathedral of Berlin, within the ancient castle precincts, was pulled down to make place for Herr von Inne's top-heavy, fussy structure, as we see it to-day, and at the consecration of the building the Emperor himself had the satisfaction of preaching a dedicatory sermon. Preaching, indeed, was his favourite hobby, even though he could usually indulge it only at sea, in view of Heligoland or in the lonely Norwegian fiords, with the officers and crew of his yacht *Hohenzollern* for congregation. His spiritual harangues to his boys in blue (the first branch of the service, be it noted, to mutiny later) differed in no respect from the Sunday outpourings of the average parson. Ejaculations such as "On, then!" "An elevating emotion, indeed!" or "Never more!" alternate with phrases like, "Turn your eyes to the Cross!" "Who will intercede for the Empire?" "Oh

that here, too, it might be said, "The King called and all came, all!" "Let not one of us be absent!" "He who can pray, he is a man!"

By constantly preaching on board his private yacht the Emperor eventually acquired such facility and fluency that when the great *débâcle* came the most ironical of his six sons (of whom the youngest died by his own hand during the war) had every justification for saying: "I am not worried as far as Papa is concerned. He could become a superintendent¹ any day." This ease in public speaking encouraged William to make himself heard on all and sundry occasions. With a flood of commonplaces rushing freely to his lips, he troubled his head very little as to the matter of his discourses. He believed he was a magnificent orator without inquiring very particularly as to what it was he said, and his very glibness deceived himself, and very often others also, as to his real lack of matter. As is widely known, he did almost as much harm by his endless speeches as by the rash, inflammatory telegrams, which were often calculated to bring about war. A few examples may be given. On one occasion he exhorted the recruits of a Berlin regiment to be ready to shoot down their own fathers and mothers in case of revolution, should "He"—"*Lui*," as the French mockingly called him—give them the word of command. Again, when troops were being sent to China to punish what had been, after all, a very understandable and pardonable mutiny, he sought to fire them for their task with the perversely jumbled phrases: "Give no quarter! Make no prisoners! Ravage like the Huns! Open the road for culture, once for all!"—words that, in the later World War, were to be bitterly wreaked upon the Germans, who have since been known abroad by no other name than that of "Huns." At Bensberg he addressed the cadets, who had just paraded before him in the sweat of their

¹ A grade in German Protestant churches above that of the ordinary "pastor."

boyish brows, with the "genial" words, "And now, youngsters, you may stuff yourselves at my expense as full as you please of sweetmeats until the buttons hold no more !" Even ravenous little fellows such as those, boys destined some day to hold positions of command as officers in the Army, do not care to be tipped and entertained in a manner so blatantly insolent. Finally, William entered upon the most terrible, the most dreadful war in history with the jesting, light-hearted, and truly barbarous words, "And now we will thrash them !" at the same time striking the upper part of his thigh with his right hand in a favourite and habitual gesture, and probably without any clear preconception of the horrors, the torments, the agonies, and the terrors that his own perpetual sabre-rattling was largely responsible for loosing upon the world.

The provocative flickers of lightning, the rumblings, fainter or louder, of distant thunder which kept other countries constantly uneasy and were expressed in such words as "If ever it should come to this, that I were obliged to call my Army to the frontiers for the Fatherland's protection, then I expect you, my soldiers, to do your duty with loyalty and devotion !" were common to almost all his innumerable speeches and proclamations from first to last. Such more or less pointed allusions to a state of constant preparedness for war form an undercurrent in all the twenty-five peace years of his reign, so that one might almost suppose that he had from the beginning some dark foreboding of the outbreak of that appalling war which he himself was helping to bring about. He toyed so long with the idea of a great conflict that eventually he actually slithered into it.

At the same time there can be no reasonable doubt that at the bottom of his not very courageous soul he was a lover of peace, and he need not have written as many books as he has done in order to convince us of this. What he lacked was that repose of spirit which the brave possess as a matter

of course, the composure of the man who has strength within himself, the quality which enabled one of his ancestors—and that by no means the worst of them—the Royal collector of soldiers, to say, when blamed for his caution and dislike of warfare, “As for those who regard me as a coward, I regard them as fools!” In vivid contrast with this ruler, who had the strength to remain true to himself, William behaved like the cowardly braggart who is perpetually raising a racket at home in order to keep up his own courage and to convince those without that they have something to be afraid of. “Our powder is dry, our swords are sharp! Should need arise, here we stand, fully armed, hand on hilt, shield before us. We would rather leave our eighteen army corps and our forty-two millions of inhabitants all dead upon the field than yield one inch of the land our fathers have won us. Wherever the German eagle has planted his talons in the earth the land is German, and German it shall remain. Should it come to war we will show them what German blows are like. You will fight to the last breath for your Emperor and your King. The attack upon us will break against my brave Army. If it is to be, then the swords shall flash from their scabbards! Charge the enemy!” This challenging and hostile attitude towards the foreigner found expression upon the very postage-stamps which, with the Emperor’s approval, portrayed a Germania in arms, drawn sword in hand. “Should the necessity come, we shall stand a united people in arms. Then Heaven pity all who stand against us!”

Repeated shots of this kind fired to intimidate, even if the cartridges are blank, eventually annoy the neighbours round about. The consequences, moreover, were quite beside William’s intention; the surrounding nations began to draw together and to form *ententes* against this Emperor who was for ever fiercely twisting his moustachios and going about, his hand menacingly thrust into his hip-pocket

as if to-morrow or the day after he really meant trouble. The close alliance between France and Russia that he brought about through his own failure to renew the secret guarantees between Germany and Russia would not have been so serious for us if he had not also fallen out with England. From the very beginning of his reign he showed a quite insane prejudice against, and hatred of, these cousins of ours across the Channel, with whom we had not been at war for many centuries, with whom, on the contrary, we had lived in amity ever since our common victory over Napoleon. This attitude was all the more remarkable in the son of an Englishwoman, brought up in English traditions in early childhood, and able to speak the language as fluently as German.

“Hail the auspicious morn,
To Prussia’s throne is born
A Royal Heir.
May he defend its laws,
Joined with Old England’s cause
Thus win all men’s applause!”

was sung enthusiastically in the London theatres, to the tune of the English national anthem, when news came of his birth, and yet the very man who seemed predestined to love the English nature and ways became more than any other Hohenzollern prince the mortal enemy of that land and people. He alienated everyone over there by his upstart manners: firstly, his revered grandmother, Victoria, whose centuries-old Court etiquette, as eye-witnesses tell us, he utterly disregarded; secondly, his uncle Edward, the British heir-apparent and his own future rival, to whom he read moral lectures on his loose way of life as often as he could get hold of him; finally, he incurred the dislike of the English people and Government by arrogantly and rudely entering into competition with them in a futile endeavour to outdo them in a sphere which had been Britannia’s pride for centuries—namely, her fleet. “The trident belongs in

our hand," he said, "and I see this goal before me, I, Admiral of the Atlantic Ocean!"

Thus it came about that exactly a century after those triumphal days, when Londoners competed for a lock of Blücher's hair and cheered the sober Frederick William III driving through Westminster as if he had been a Messiah, and rather more than fifty years after Frederick III, William's father, drove through the same town as the happy bridegroom of the English Princess Royal and a new-made Freeman of the City of London, the people in the streets of that same city were promenading its pavements, after a German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare, with giant placards bearing the words, "Down with Prussia! Annihilate it! Death to William! No peace with the Hohenzollerns!" Why it should have been necessary for us to quarrel so bitterly with England, to let matters shape to a most bloody war, fifty, or perhaps even ten, years from now, no one will be able to say. William, at any rate, appears to have regarded it as one of his missions in world history to break the English command of the seas.

The theory of the divine right of kings, to which his sainted great-uncle had adhered to his own ruin, was early drummed into William by the narrow and pious Hinzpeter, whose guiding maxim was that a ruler should never come under the influence of other men but remain directly under that of God. The Emperor, accordingly, took himself for a chosen vessel of the Lord, one to whom He continuously revealed His will. When his prayers were not heard by God during the war (and we know from many witnesses that at that time, and particularly during the last critical days, he spent hours upon his knees), this belief enabled him to reconcile himself to the new, tragic dispensation with a submission that has something awful in its nerveless passivity. "I bear my personal fate with resignation," he said, "for the Lord knows what He does

and what He wills. He knows why He permits me to undergo this trial. I will bear it all patiently and wait for what else God proposes for me.”

So may and ought a monk to talk, or a priest, but not a man who has brought about the most terrible of all wars by his own overweening pride and incapacity. In his *apologia* (written in banishment and little calculated to raise him in the general estimation) the Emperor attempts, with Jesuitical and adroit sophistries, to point out the impracticability of three of the courses he might have taken after the *débâcle*. To go back to the Army? It was too late for that. To join the conquered Army on its return home? That would have led to civil war, which, it may be mentioned in passing, occurred in any case without his presence. To die by his own hand, as Frederick the Great would have done, at once and in cold blood, if he had lost the Seven Years War? “I was debarred from that course from the first by my resolutely Christian point of view,” the Emperor persuades himself, regarding this third way out—the very man who in times of peace had often strutted before his troops with his ancestor Albert Achilles’ phrase, “I know of no more honourable place to die in than in the midst of my foes!”—the very same extoller of virtue and courage who had boasted that “the word *fear* does not occur in the German officer’s vocabulary”—the very same swaggerer who now goes on to say: “And would not people (but what people?) have said in that case, ‘How cowardly! He is escaping responsibility now by suicide!’ ” In consequence, then, of all these self-deceptive and highly fallacious conclusions, he takes the one way out remaining, for a soldier the most impossible of all—namely, desertion.

For it must not be forgotten that all his life long it had been his ideal to be a soldier, and nothing better than a soldier. “He is a splendid recruit, lads,” said old Wrangel, as hardened an old campaigner as any Prussian

general, addressing the Berlin crowds at the time of the Prince's birth; and even his father Frederick, himself a little crazy on the uniform, said irritably to his wife, as the boy began to grow up, "The fellow can talk of nothing but his service nowadays!" During the twenty-five years of almost perpetual journeying that earned him the popular nickname of "*Der Reise-kaiser*" ("The Travel Kaiser") the Army was always the object of his most frequent visits, his most numerous speeches, his greatest preoccupation. To his forces by sea and land he made literally thousands of speeches, all essentially alike. To the youngest as to the oldest of his warriors he was never tired of lauding and preaching the military virtues, yet when the critical moment came, he himself sinned against the most basic of them all. He spent practically the whole of his reign buttoned into some showy uniform or other, there being scarcely an occasion on which he appeared in civilian dress—a fact that was unfavourably noted abroad. The mainspring and almost continuous occupation of his life till the outbreak of war was inspecting and reviewing his troops, who were so plagued and harassed during those years that one might almost have supposed the intention was to make them heartily sick of their "gay" military profession. He revelled in the dust of manœuvres and parade-grounds, and no Hohenzollern before him, not even the soldier-mad father of Frederick the Great, was so furiously bitten by the passion for army routine and drill as William II. He had not, like his sainted grandfather (to whom he alone accorded the title of "the Great"), merely his standing Army on land to care for, parades to inspect, new insignia, badges of rank, oak-leaves, monograms, pipings, buckles, grenadier caps, hanging-cords, plumes, and such trifles to invent, as well as interminable, innumerable moral sermons to preach; to his other responsibilities he had added that of a navy, "Willie's little toy," as his uncle Edward and the English laughingly named the

inadequate naval arm he was always brandishing in their faces. A transitory venture of King Frederick William IV's notwithstanding, there can hardly be said to have been such a thing as a German *fighting* navy hitherto. William II now slowly built one up, and, if the tales of many of the sufferers are to be believed, the amount of spit and polish imposed upon the sailors of the new arm during the process by the Emperor's express command deserves to rank among the torments of Dante's *Inferno*.

The fact is that the Emperor's understanding of the "war game" did not go beyond a superficial knowledge of drill and allied matters, and as soon as things became serious he had to leave the niceties of the art to others. From old Schlieffen, who originated the calamitous plan of marching through Belgium, down to the most junior staff-officer, the whole Army laughed at the impracticability, by all the canons of military science, of the problems William set himself in Imperial manoeuvres, exercises which he engaged upon autumn by autumn, much to his own satisfaction in appearing in his star rôle, resplendent on horseback, and very much to the affliction of the other members of his cavalcade. It might fairly have been expected, none the less, that the man who had so often played the "All-Highest War-Lord" would stand his ground well when called upon to exhibit personally the soldierly virtues he had so frequently demanded from others. And yet when that moment came he surprisingly did the very worst thing he could have done; he surrendered to a Dutch frontier post the sword he had declared at the beginning of the war he would never sheathe save as victor, and fled to the protection of a foreign Queen. Contrasted with this the bearing of Napoleon III, as, surrounded by his enemies, he folded his arms in silence and allowed himself to be taken prisoner with his defeated army at Sedan, seems heroic indeed—a resolute and dignified submission to the misfortunes of war from

which the bravest and best are not exempt. But on that grey autumnal evening of November 9-10, 1918, William was false to the first and most obvious of a soldier's duties, the infringement of which is designated in Article 9 of the old Articles of War as an unworthy and dishonourable act, involving degradation of rank in time of peace, and, in the field, immediate execution of the death penalty by shooting. On that one black November night William shattered not only his own dynasty but all the centuries-old traditions of the Prussian Army, which he himself had for twenty-five years tricked out in swaggering words. Faithfulness to duty—that fetish, that idol, before which clouds of incense had ascended without ceasing, was now forsaken by himself! He was the first Hohenzollern ruler to flee from his people, and by his action he annihilated that Army of which the Prussian kings could justly boast as their finest work. On that dark and dreary November night there fell with his fall all Prussia's banners, standards, and honourable emblems, all those insignia so often renewed by him, so often borne past him in the pomp and splendour of reviews and parades, so often acclaimed by him in his resounding, or in his harsh, parade-ground tones, sometimes with tears of emotion in his eyes. On that November night all the titles and Orders of the Empire and the Kingdom that he and his ancestors had founded and bestowed were buried in an instant of time beneath the ruins of his throne.

On that same eternally ignominious night of his desertion he also demonstrated before all men that the resounding phrases, the full spate of words with which he had deluged his own country and world for five-and-twenty years, were so much flummery, himself no more than an actor. And suddenly, as though scales had fallen from their eyes, people saw the comedian, hitherto so adroitly concealed in the Emperor. He was, indeed, one of the most brilliant frauds ever wrapped in the Royal ermine. Even Bismarck, the prudent, was taken in by him and by his powers of

attraction, until the aged Junker's eyes were opened, first by his wife and then by events, to the fact that he had been bitterly deceived in this Hohenzollern sprig who, during his few months as Crown Prince, had seemed to be his obedient scholar. It is true, of course, that the usually clear-sighted Bismarck ought to have seen daylight when the newly-made Emperor sent him his picture inscribed with Caligula's words: "*Cave! Adsum!*" ("Beware! I am here!"). But the first Imperial Chancellor was no doubt so devotedly and submissively attached to the Hohenzollern family that nothing but his summary dismissal from his post at William's hands could shake his loyalty to one of that dynasty. In the matter of the Hohenzollerns' great "Emperor-maker" and "Drudge," William the Faithless's most discreditable transaction was, perhaps, the hypocritical telegram he sent to some petty Count or other immediately after the old Chancellor's violent and overhasty dismissal, beginning with the words, "My heart is as heavy as if I had lost my grandfather for a second time. But it was ordained by God for me, and therefore I must bear it."

There is no disputing the strong personal charm the Emperor exercised at times upon the most various types of men. His not unhandsome, if not very intellectual face, with the audacious little pointed moustache, won him the favour of the populace from the first. Indeed, he attracted men more than women, so that for a time, like his great ancestor Frederick, he was quite unjustly suspected of a propensity for, if not the actual practice of, homosexual vice. That accusation falls to the ground. He lived in good "sergeant-major wedlock"—to repeat his English uncle's very pertinent if somewhat malicious *mot*—with his good and pious wife, who, as a petty German Princess, never recovered from an attitude of adoring admiration for him, and unfortunately adopted a somewhat servile and cowed bearing towards her husband. Of the passion, the

libertinism, where women were concerned, that had characterized some of the earlier Hohenzollerns, notably Frederick William II and Prince Louis Ferdinand, William had not a trace. Neither the "*Weibar*" nor the "*Mächens*," as he was wont to speak of the sex in his parade-ground voice, were ever a serious danger to him. Similarly, he had no hard struggle with the other fleshly temptation, that of strong drink; for, unlike Bismarck, the wine-drinker and lie-abed, he was generally sober and an early-riser by preference, nor did he scruple before he dismissed his great Chancellor to hunt "the old fellow" mercilessly out of his bed in the morning. Outwardly remarkable for his alert and vigorous bearing and decked with all the insignia of his Imperial power, he was able to impress with respect not merely the average crowd, but numbers of men by no means disposed by birth or by a Prussian education to blind subservience. Even as a little ten-year-old lieutenant he had learnt how to conceal the arm that had been crippled by the forceps at his birth, and he kept up the concealment of that infirmity all through life with extraordinary self-command, so that it is scarcely noticeable in any of his innumerable photographs and portraits. No doubt the perpetual concealment of this defect had a pernicious influence on his character and strengthened his innate tendency to posturing and to play-acting.

William's designedly impressive bearing struck the common people sooner than it did the degenerate upper classes, the nation's administrators and aristocracy, so that the populace of Cologne shouted, "*Do kütt dä Lohengrin!*" ("There comes Lohengrin!"), when, shortly after his accession, he appeared in their city sailing down from Bonn, artfully posed in the ship's bows in an arbour of laurel. On the intellectual side the Emperor constantly impressed people by his really remarkable gift for picking up subjects with rapidity and linking them with their context. He could gain a smattering of anything with

uncommon speed, but, it must be admitted, little more than a smattering. In this way, however, he struck even men of sober and experienced judgment, such as Cecil Rhodes, Ballin, Miquel, and Rathenau with amazed admiration of his capacities.

It is equally true that the first favourable impression he evoked soon began to wear off once those over whom he had cast his spell had turned their backs on His Majesty and were able to reflect quietly on the superficiality and essential emptiness of his character and conversation. He was like a splendid firework that dumbfounds the beholder for a brief moment without leaving any lasting impression. Even as a source of stimulation to others he was not as effective as he might have been, for he entirely lacked the quality of perseverance and hated the very name of experience. He took a fleeting interest in a thousand projects without thoroughly mastering a single subject. With the shallowness of the true dabbler and dilettante he occupied himself with trifles in all spheres, and did no good or lasting work in any. He showed himself most effective and knowledgeable upon the subject of teaching and the education of youth. As a pupil at the Cassel Gymnasium, whose headmaster, Professor Doctor Vogt, demanded strict fulfilment of all school duties even from his Royal scholars, he had gained some real insight, and had experienced in his own person the ills of the old-fashioned, dry-as-dust classical education. He passed through the school as a very mediocre pupil and was seventeenth in the leaving examination. Everything the Emperor later wrote or spoke for the improvement and reconstruction of grammar schools has point and meaning. He was justly opposed to the Latin prose system, still maintained in German schools, and to the senseless overburdening of the scholars with home-work. He stood, very rightly, for more attention to physical exercises in the "*Gymnasiums*" (grammar-schools). Yet even in this field, with which he was

really acquainted, his first fine enthusiasm soon flagged, and he afterwards calmly left the question of school reforms to the approved experts—that is, to neglect and forgetfulness.

There is no doubt that the Emperor had a genuine love for the Fine Arts, and yet neither he himself nor any of those about him did anything to cultivate his taste and predilections. He was permitted to pass hasty judgment in artistic matters while nobody had the courage to criticize him more than by, at most, a covert smile or shoulder shrug. He was allowed to scrawl boldly over architect's plans and sketches for monuments, just as, after the famous example of "*der alte Fritz*," he scribbled his miserable marginal notes for the benefit of his ministers and ambassadors, and was furious when Bismarck plucked up courage to curb the habit. He was allowed to do exactly as he liked without let or hindrance as the founder of new, or the restorer of old, objects of beauty; to express his uninstructed views in archæology—the archæology of Assyria, for instance; while even in this subject, where conjectures are normally received with an extreme caution amounting to mistrust, people evinced slavish amazement and admiration for the stupendous knowledge, the remarkable brilliance in surmise, of the Emperor, who invariably, of course, hit the right nail on the head.

William's largely frivolous entourage never contradicted him, particularly in artistic matters, with the result that his influence in that sphere during a reign which covered the most prosperous period Germany had ever known, or perhaps ever will know, was wholly destructive and sterile. When, after William's fall, an expert art critic was deputed by the new Republic to inspect the castles and was asked in the Reichstag whether there was anything of artistic worth among the buildings the late Kaiser had erected or among the art treasures he had bought and collected, he was obliged to answer, "Nothing. Not one

single object!" And that perhaps is the most caustic thing history has to say of the late Emperor.

Even in the art of the theatre, which in view of his own play-acting tendencies should have appealed to him more than any other, he achieved nothing as manager of his own private theatre to compare, let us say, with the work of the Duke of Meiningen. He muddled through some costume-piece or other from time to time, just as he daubed water-colours on board his yacht *Hohenzollern*, and even a few oil-paintings, which fortunately very few people had the privilege of seeing. He ordered bad plays to be put on, and even in the very few commissions he gave his Court bards he destroyed the remnants of their originality by demanding unconditional glorification of the House of Hohenzollern. By his "encouragement," so-called, more properly, his commands, he did nothing but injury to Wildenbruch, Lauff, and even to the Italian composer Leoncavallo. Even in music his central interest was still the glorification of his person or his family. He loved to give as password "*Alleweg guet Zolre*," and to exact it even from Bismarck, with whom it really can hardly have been necessary! Military bands and male-voice choirs pleased him best, though a sentimental strain in him inspired an easy enthusiasm for folk-song. God knows what grandiose sentiments he felt, what flattered pride of ancestry, when he heard the strains of

*"Wilhelmus van Nassauwe,
Du Held van duitschem Blod."*

He was actually jealous of Richard Wagner and his fame. He punished Bayreuth for it with his disdain and often declared: "I cannot think what people want with this Wagner. After all, he was only a quite common *Kapellmeister*!"

Unfortunately his tendency to presumption and despotism increased more and more with the years of a reign outwardly brilliant and prosperous, though up to the last it rested on foundations laid down by Bismarck. He came

to think himself infallible and inviolable. All would-be monitors were banished from the presence as abject, envious, small-minded pessimists, for he was wont to declare with emphasis and in a raised voice, "I am an optimist through and through." His arrogance eventually swelled to something very like insanity at times, and when one of the numerous physicians-in-ordinary he dragged about with him everywhere (he was very nervous of his health) assured him that he had a little cold, he snarled at him angrily, "A little cold! I think not, indeed! You mean a big one. With me everything is big." This intolerable egotism unhappily went hand in hand, as he grew older, with a tendency to brutality, which he shared with his great-great-grandfather, the corpulent Frederick William II. In the latter, however, this trait had been modified by a large measure of good-nature while William was capable of actual malice. His parasites, now that his fall has unsealed their mouths, have some extremely unpleasant things to tell us of his "rudenesses," to put it mildly, towards his Court, his travelling companions, and even his wife. Count Zedlitz-Trützschler, a former court-marshal, tells on more than one page of his diaries of the Kaiser's frequent habit of striking, pinching, and treading on the toes of such as would consent to put up with such treatment.

Far worse even than his ill-treatment of such sycophantic rabble (booked up against him to the very day and hour by his one-time Polonius!) was his want of respect for his subjects, especially as the latter were most publicly and solemnly represented in the Reichstag, which he constantly abused as a "Pack of scoundrels!" "Blockheads!" "Idle fellows!" "Miserable gang!" "Unpatriotic outcasts!" and such opprobrious epithets. "You can pay taxes till you are black and blue in the face!" was the sole function he conceded to these elected representatives of the people.

The Emperor loved to talk and talk about his sense of

social responsibility, but he really had scarcely any affection for a people whom he was leading not towards days of prosperity but to a massacre unparalleled in human history. He sought to make his breach with Bismarck appear to be the result of the latter's unwillingness to co-operate with him in his schemes for his people's benefit, particularly in his legislation for the protection of Labour. That was the reason why he "was obliged, with set teeth, to part with this most meritorious man." Alas for William's so-called "Laws for the Protection of the Workers," those little bits of court-plaster with which he sought to close the great, open, smarting wounds of the Labour question in the body politic! They subsisted more on paper than in fact, and many thought and said from the first that their only real object was to provide clerical employment in the huge Government offices for the many hardened old non-commissioned officers discharged at the conclusion of their term of service and fit for nothing else.

Socialist statisticians produced figures to prove that William's Laws for the Protection of Labour would only benefit a very small proportion of the workers by the proposed old-age pensions, for most of them would be dead before it was due; men of commerce cursed the tiresome business of sticking on stamps which demanded a host of officials and was simply another handicap to German trade in the world market; thinkers and moralists emphasized the unworthiness of this pauperization of the working class, upon whom the most heavy responsibilities were to be imposed while the simplest of all, namely, the care of themselves and theirs, was to be taken from them; and finally, a few discerning and far-sighted observers of the times felt that it might be better to devote unremitting attention to the prevention of a future war that would, in a trice, annihilate or cripple more human life than all the old-age pension schemes and health insurance acts ever thought of could ever contrive to spoon-feed! Abroad,

William's little household remedies for healing the ills of the workers were simply scoffed at, and when during the war he introduced the same ameliorative measures into Belgium *par ordre de mufti*, Labour there shrugged its shoulders and declined the Danai gifts with which it was to be made happy.

No mundane considerations, however, could influence William. He calmly pursued his road—his blind-alley, rather—and did not appear to notice that the Socialist movement, which he was arrogantly prepared to polish off single-handed as a mere “transitory phenomenon,” was becoming under his rule more and more powerful in Germany every year. In spite of his persistent attitude of optimism, his world-philosophy was, in the main, unbelieving and actually abject. He had no faith in the possibility of peace and mutual understanding between the nations, and particularly not in the invitations of others to secure that peace. When Nicholas II of Russia, his dear cousin Nicky, inspired by Bertha Suttner as his great-great-uncle Alexander had once been by the Baroness Krudener to make an effort towards reconciliation, submitted his proposals for disarmament to the European Powers and called the first great Peace Conference at The Hague, William was furious that another than himself had first thought of the idea and stood maliciously aside. As our own ambassaador to The Hague tells us, he rejected the proposal for a permanent International Court at The Hague—the promising and well-meant precursor of the present League of Nations—with the scoffing and foolish words, “A sharp sword is the best form of disarmament!” The fact that an English admiral on the same occasion talked the same nonsense does not in the least excuse William for his own pronouncement, so much more weighty and far more far-reaching in its consequences, on that first occasion of proposed disarmament. It was he who wrecked the earliest possibility of a Europe united

and at peace, and the whole Continent remembered it against him.

We must not lose sight now of the tremendous, the preponderant influence exercised in the Germany of those days by an Imperial ruler who claimed absolute authority in all departments and had his say in everything. And yet when at last matters came to a head and the war he had helped to bring about as master of the biggest and finest Army in the world suddenly broke out, he became very meek and subdued all at once, acted the unsuspecting innocent, and declared that he had been jockeyed into the scrape blindfold and against his will by the Foreign Office. Of all his affirmations of innocence in this matter one only has any validity; he had, it is true, very little knowledge of Germany's relations with foreign Powers. For decades he had permitted information of home and foreign affairs to reach him solely through the medium of newspaper cuttings supplied by a news department established by himself. The officials there naturally only let him see what would please him, "a filtered public opinion," as his son, a far cleverer politician than the unsuspecting Kaiser, expresses it in his reminiscences of the short period when he reigned as his father's deputy. Just as in the old days at the French Court editions of the classics were prepared with the offensive passages omitted *in usum delphini*—for the use of the Dauphin—so here anything in the state of world affairs that could displease the Emperor was eliminated and the news presented in suitable guise *in usum regis*—for the use of the King. The consequence was that William got a hopelessly one-sided view of the doings of the world, and the comparative historical tables, like a schoolboy's essay in statesmanship, which he drew up in banishment in 1919, go still farther to prove this. Indeed, everything about his unpractical and prejudiced method of gaining information and afterwards expressing his views upon it has really something quite

childlike about it. "But woe to the land whose king is a child!"

The ludicrous situation thus arose that the autocrat who was so determined to be absolute master over everything and everybody was constantly shadowed by a secret, secondary, governing power, which formed his opinions and distorted his commands at its own good pleasure, or even simply acted over his head. Strangely enough there were at the head of this "conspiracy" two men whom he could not endure, and who yet, each in his turn, kept their hands perpetually over his upon the reins and directed the car of State at their will. During some fifteen years of peace this was done by Herr von Holstein, the wire-puller of the Foreign Office, the grizzled "His Excellency" with the hyena eyes, a secret service agent under Bismarck, a sinister mystery man, who had nothing in common with the Emperor William save an obstinate, stupid hatred of England and a certain preference for male society. In von Holstein the propensity which led William to choose the exclusive society of gentlemen rather than that in which ladies participated expressed itself in a loathsome and secretly vicious manner, and he was eventually constrained to use his knowledge of State secrets on the Stock Exchange in order to get the wherewithal to stop the mouths of informers and blackmailers. In war-time, however, it was Ludendorff, the "sergeant-major eater," as William would call him sorrowfully, who thought out and directed the movements in the field, and eventually most other departments of State also, and treated the Kaiser as a mere puppet, permitting him merely to look on, or at most to travel about with a box full of decorations. Both these men, Holstein and Ludendorff, avoided personal contact with William as far as possible, pretended to be unapproachable and overwhelmed in affairs, and thereby succeeded in their object, which was to inspire him with extraordinary respect for themselves. The last of the

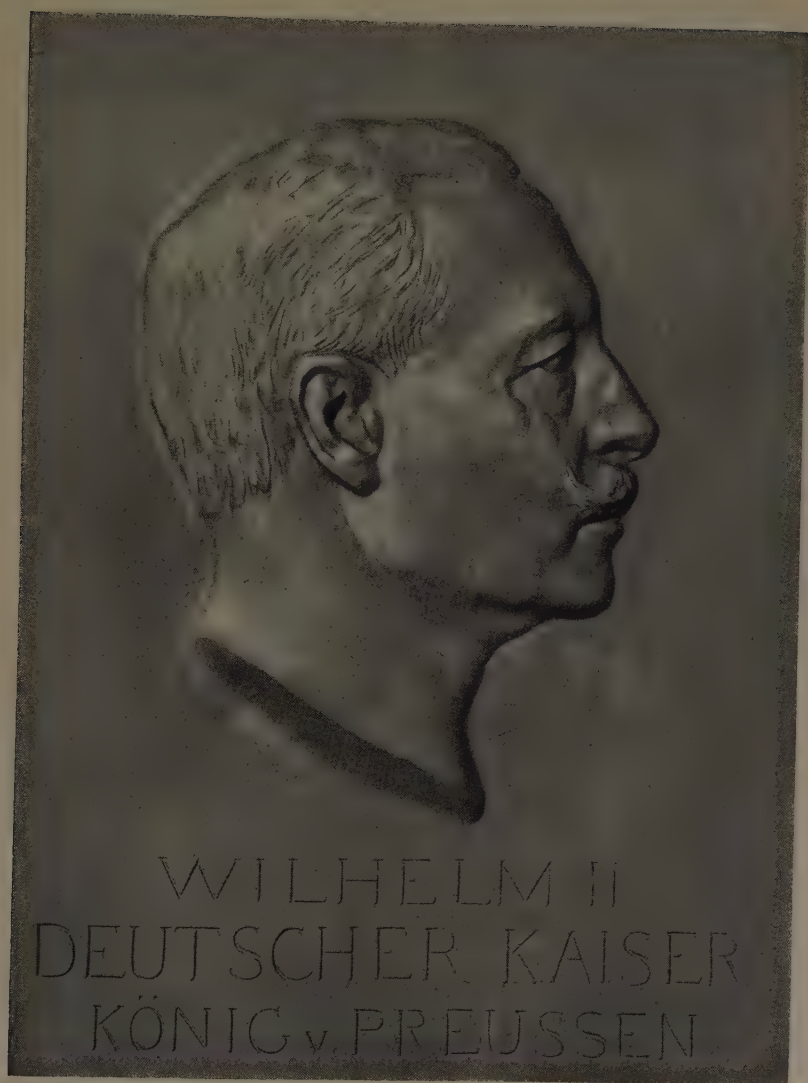
Emperors of Germany is obliged sadly to admit in the very resigned *Apologia* he has written in banishment that both these gentlemen practically disregarded any words, thoughts, or wishes of his.

In his search for a Chancellor at the most critical moment of his reign William (who had already run through seven before Prince Max von Baden), followed the example of his great-great-uncle, Frederick William IV, when he threw himself into Manteuffel's arms and chose the most unsuitable candidate possible, namely, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, a man more capable of putting together a bad paragraph than of the wise conduct of the State. Reactionary to the very marrow, Bethmann-Hollweg was also characterized by a self-satisfied presumption only surpassed by that of his lord and master himself. As a schoolboy he was nicknamed "the Governess." Bethmann-Hollweg slid into the World War with an absence of any misgiving that appalled even the young Crown Prince with his purely military education, and preserved to the last the almost childish delusion that England would remain neutral or even enter the conflict on Germany's side. He next proceeded to slap the whole civilized world in the face with his brutish and asinine declaration in the Reichstag that "in case of necessity a treaty was only a scrap of paper." During the war itself this calamitous Chancellor quarrelled with all our military and naval leaders by land and sea one after another, and finally, after Germany's collapse, had the brazen effrontery to declare, when brought far too mildly and half-heartedly to a reckoning, that he had only carried out the policy the German people themselves had wished for—probably the most shameless and irresponsible speech that ever issued from the mouth of a statesman on this earth!

William watched the handiwork of his last peace-time Chancellor with a large measure of indifference. He, the "Peace Kaiser," apathetically allowed this bureaucrat,

this ignorant quill-driver, who should never have adorned a higher post than that of a Prussian sub-prefect (just as the Kaiser himself, in his English uncle's words, should have remained "at best a Potsdam lieutenant"), to rush him into war. Through some throw-back or hereditary trait in the Hohenzollern blood the extravagant absurdity came to pass that William, with a sudden resurgence of devotion to the Habsburgs, of time-honoured "*Nibelung-troth*" (no one has ever been able to make head or tail of this romantic allusion), clung passionately to the mentally deficient Francis Joseph—the last crowned Habsburg prince who, according to Louis II of Bavaria, who knew him intimately, had a vulgar soul—and to his airy counsellors. The reverent and submissive attitude to the Habsburgs of which the Great Elector had fought very shy, which Frederick the Great had scoffed at, and of which William I had been even more wary than Bismarck himself, proved in the end the ruin of the Hohenzollerns, when William insisted on pledging himself unconditionally for the moribund Austrian dynasty. He became what so many of his ancestors had been—little more than a Habsburg vassal; indeed, he had constantly tried to persuade Wildenbruch to write a piece on the subject of "Frederick von Hohenzollern's support of the election of Rudolph von Habsburg to the Imperial throne." The World War began. With horror and cold fear clutching his heart the actor-Emperor, who thought he had bewitched all the world, suddenly perceived that he had not a single friend, none but enemies round about him; particularly among his brothers in the profession, the reigning monarchs whose affection he had always failed to win, in spite of the fact that he had constantly paid visits to these exalted gentlemen, often very much to their embarrassment, or honoured them with undesired invitations. Even Bismarck had warned him (as, long before, Baron von Stein had warned the politically inept Queen Louise), not to visit the Czar

of Russia uninvited. But "Willy" was determined to win the admiration and affection of all his grand relations, while all the time his mania for virtue and his noisiness—so unlike his father's amiability and reserve—made the thing impossible. How greatly he overrated the value and influence upon the nations of the personal relations between prince and prince in a time of growing democracy is shown by the fact that he boasted of having paid a number of visits to the former Empress Eugenie (who was probably far from pleased to receive them)—"in order to win the affection of the French Republic." And his inexperience of the world of fact appears again when, after England's declaration of war, he lamented over and over again, "Impossible! Impossible! I have the word of a King!" having actually buoyed himself up on a vague promise made by his Royal cousin, the very nearly powerless King George, to his brother Henry, to do what he could to avoid the outbreak of hostilities. The reality of representative government as it obtained in England, and should, according to the letter of the law, have obtained in Germany also, was to him entirely foreign and anti-pathetic. The Reichstag was to him no more than a meeting of gossips, and the remark of some East Prussian boor that "The Emperor might turn out a lieutenant and ten men to shoot every dog in this democratic kennel any moment!" was one after his own heart. His essential hatred of the parliamentary system was not modified in the slightest when he eventually decided to alter the Prussian system of election by class, forcibly introduced by Frederick William IV, and "to prepare a happy acknowledgment in the political sphere against the homecoming of a magnificent people, proved in the field." This "joyous Easter greeting" came too late, however; it was meaningless, because the solid ground already heaved beneath him, and the German people were already preparing to take for themselves the Constitution they had let slip in the 'forty-eight.



EMPEROR WILLIAM II
Bronze relief by Adolf von Hildebrand

Whether William, had it come to the point, would have allowed the phrase, "Empire is service to the folk," to be wrung from his unwilling lips, and would, after a victorious war, have fulfilled the promise of his "Easter greeting," is at least very questionable. Probably the performance of his vow would have been "thrust to the rear," as was that of his ancestor, Frederick William III, after Leipzig and Waterloo, or else would have taken such shrunken shape that his brave and proven people, his "lieges," as he liked to call them when in amiable mood, would have got little advantage from it.

Even more bitter than his disillusionment over his faithless fellow-rulers and "dear cousins," beginning with "Nicky" and "Georgy" and ending with little Victor Emmanuel, was that apostasy of his own creatures which faced the fallen Kaiser after his flight to Holland, as, one by one, they drew away from him. Waldersee and Tirpitz, Kiderlen and Moltke—they all, after the event, renounced him and his "crude, high-handed, clumsy" manner of governing the State. Every day brought to light fresh diaries and reminiscences, in which, of course, the Emperor's fall had been prophesied years previously. Even Count Philip von Eulenburg, who had been his intimate friend for years, and had always gazed up at his Emperor in an attitude of tender adoration, was now, it appeared, the man who had repeatedly given that monarch gentle warnings against overstraining the limits of his authority and the power of his personality. Down to the most subordinate court-marshal they all turned their dirty squirts upon the fallen All-Highest. If his old valet Schulz, who had dressed and undressed him all his life long like a child, published no reminiscences against the Kaiser it was, in the opinion of some cynics, solely because he had been kept so busy by his master's perpetual journeys that he had forgotten how to write!

The men who behaved most decently by the one-time

Emperor were Ludendorff, resolutely loyal, and Bülow, undoubtedly the best of his Chancellors, both of whom now maintained the silence of a well-bred reserve. It is another proof of William's lack of knowledge of men that it was just from these two that he had expected the least consideration. He had regarded Prince Bülow, who had the right to "thee and thou" him, as his personal enemy ever since the day when he had called him to task for his senseless and harmful speeches, the Reichstag having drawn his attention, too late and far too mildly, to the evil results that were bound to arise for us from the Emperor's provocative handling of foreign affairs and his everlasting picking of quarrels with other Powers. After the gentle admonitions of his Chancellor and his people, the all-powerful Kaiser wept for days together like a snubbed schoolboy, took to his bed and even considered, unfortunately only momentarily, abdicating the throne, until the usual applause of the crowds in the streets slowly restored his old self-confidence.

Ever after he hated Prince Bülow as the whipped child hates its schoolmaster, holding that his Chancellor had failed to protect him adequately against the dogs and swine of the Reichstag—*him*, ruler by the grace of God, who, indeed, from the beginning of his reign was constantly exposing himself and, to Bismarck's discomforture, letting himself be seen and heard without the proper ministerial coverings! "There! On that very spot I chased that carrion away!" said William, referring to Bülow, while he pointed to a photograph of the little garden behind the castle on the Spree and talked in his wild, boyish way to Prince Fürstenberg, who was playing the nurse at Donaueschingen to restore the Emperor's moral tone after the nervous breakdown that had followed the Reichstag attack.

It cannot be denied that the German people, who tolerated this last autocrat and all his pernicious doings for

decades, share an equal responsibility with the Emperor himself for the eventual outbreak of a war that was really lost before it was begun. None the less, it must not be forgotten in exculpation of the patience and inertia of the Germans of those days that any disparagement of the Emperor was very severely punished, and that, more especially in the early years of William's reign, so many sentences for *lèse-majesté* were passed that the prisons and fortresses were insufficient to accommodate the criminals who had dared to criticize the sacred and inviolable person of the Kaiser. Again, opinion in the Reichstag, at that time very loyal, very middle-class, and little penetrated by Socialist influences, considered it inadmissible and undutiful to examine too severely the head of the State and his sayings and doings, while the then president of the House of German Representatives, sworn to loyalty, kept servile and obsequious watch that this time-honoured attitude (which was not grounded or set down in the Constitution itself) should be strictly upheld. Even that honourable old Liberal, Eugen Richter, whom William foolishly derided on every possible occasion, was immediately shouted down when he pointed out in the Reichstag the disadvantageous consequences for the nation of some of the Kaiser's little masterpieces of oratory. The result was that William, entirely surrounded by parasites and toadies and at the head of a docile people without any long views in statesmanship, was free to pander to his own whims, to commit what follies he would, and to base his policy "on impulse"—the most dangerous way, as Bismarck had already vainly warned him, in which a State can possibly be governed.

When William arrived, stripped of sword, lands, and honour, to claim the tried hospitality of the Netherlands—a country that he had more than once only just failed to drag into the war that laid Europe waste—he was met by the hooting and hissing of the Dutch mob. Catcalls of this sort accompanied the Royal fugitive's train for a considerable

distance as it made its slow way through the wintry landscape. As a conquered man he had refused to face his own people, but he could not escape the clamour of a foreign mob, however tight he might close the windows of his saloon carriage. Eventually the Wasserburg, huge and dark, a relic of the time of Spanish rule in Holland, and now the seat of Count Bentinck at Amerongen, received the unbidden guest. "What do you say to this?" were his first notable words to his host, who met him at the station of the little country town. "And now give me a proper English tea!" was the second historic sentence recorded from his lips at Amerongen. While there William, in order to occupy himself *with* himself, grew a handsome beard flecked with white, and proudly promenaded the strongly guarded, wooded park in the rôle of a quiet old gentleman, disillusioned and forsaken by his people. A year later he moved out of this gloomy and forbidding barracks, reminiscent of the days of the cold-blooded Duke of Alba and his still more cruel son, and settled at the neighbouring and more friendly country town of Doorn, a favourite holiday resort of the burghers of Utrecht, where the Empress had managed to find him a pretty little, fairy-tale castle. William lost greatly with the remaining loyalists among his subjects by entering upon a new marriage at the earliest possible date after the death of his Empress, who had taken the fall of her House and her throne far more to heart than the self-satisfied author of these misfortunes. In this matter the Imperial widower's conduct was far less decent and considerate than that of his great-grandfather Frederick William III, with whose unhappy situation after Tilsit his great-grandson would often compare his own lot after his fall, though he hardly succeeded in displaying any of his predecessor's passive heroism on that occasion. While Frederick William III had allowed fourteen lonely years to pass after the death of his beloved Louise before he decided on a new—and merely morganatic—marriage, and only then after his

youngest daughter had married and left her father's house, William II hardly waited for the prescribed period of mourning after the decease of his "eternally unforgettable Empress" before hastily remarrying. For the rest, he spent his time as a banished man in wood-cutting and writing memoirs. He had felt drawn to wood-cutting even as a boy, and intended at one time, seeing that every Hohenzollern, after an old custom of the family, must learn some handicraft, to become a turner; his stunted left arm, however, eventually decided him to choose the calling of a stamp-cutter and engraver. As a wood-cutter his day's work was sometimes quite considerable, but as a writer he was less distinguished. His first strong impulse to this activity arose when he realized that there was much to be earned in this field, and he seized his opportunity in a most business-like way, extracting the best possible terms from his publishers. *In suam maiorem gloriam* he next proceeded to write his books, exactly as, with the same pious object, he had formerly launched his speeches. They are not remarkable for art or brilliance of style, though a strong strain of self-conceit gives rise at times to such flowers of speech as "*Es scheint sich hier ein Pfeiler zu der von mir gesuchten Brücke zwischen Asien und Europa herauszu kristallisieren*" ("From this there seemed to crystallize a pier for that bridge I was seeking between Europe and Asia").

More than once William had very emphatically called the attention of a certain Viennese writer of sensational stage pieces which suited the Emperor's taste to the figure of the Emperor Charles V and its suitability for dramatic treatment. It appears that in the course of his meditations on this mightiest of the early German Emperors, William had "crystallized" a certain resemblance between their two fates. Yet what a difference there is between the two men! Charles, a man of taste, profoundly cultured, the friend and patron of Titian, an eminent ruler, prudent, sad, and dignified in bearing, laid down the sceptre not

because he was a beaten man, but because his nearest friends had disillusioned him and made him scorn the affairs of mankind; even so, he did not lay it down until he had wisely divided the Empire, which had become too large (the largest, in fact, that the world had ever seen), between his successors, his son and his brother, which done he retired from Estremadura to the stillness of a monastery, stripping himself of all the vanities of this world to lead a life of recollection and penitence. William, the whilom patron of everything feeble and unworthy in the arts, superficial in all branches of knowledge, showed himself frivolous and fondly optimistic in the rôle of Emperor till disaster overtook him, when his first idea, as everything crumbled about him, was to flee into exile at headlong speed without a further thought for his realm and its future—taking with him, moreover, everything he could take from his “disloyal” people—to live in banishment in a foreign land empanoplied in all his earthly vanities, keeping up his little Court with sycophants to address him as “Your Majesty,” and leading a phantom existence.

“WILLIAM III”

(*b.* 1882)

“WHAT do you think, Hindenburg? Couldn’t my son at least become Emperor?—perhaps succeed to my throne as William III? What do you think about it, Gröner? William III! Couldn’t that be done?”

With a torrent of words like these the Emperor addressed his gentlemen in the dank gardens of the Villa Fraineuse in Belgium on the gloomy morning of November 9, 1918. It was the last big public scene in which the Kaiser was to play a part. According to his wont, he had been pacing up and down the garden with his suite for an hour and more, himself talking almost continuously, passionately, and with many gesticulations. Everlasting talk and no action had left the others more and more exhausted and mute. “My son will be here soon. What am I to say to him when he comes? Is it possible for him to become William III? Give me a plain answer, please! I can bear the worst now.”

Shoulder-shrugging and silence were the replies. Save from Gröner, whom the Emperor and the Crown Prince both represented later on as a very devil incarnate and the destroyer of their dynasty, which he certainly was not, who ventured the brief answer, “I fear it is too late now, Your Majesty.” “Why too late? What is the latest, then, from those pig-dogs in Berlin?”

The Crown Prince appeared—William III already perhaps in the Emperor’s eyes. Obeying his father’s orders he had left Waulsort, his last headquarters in the rocky valley of the Maas, at an early hour that morning in the car in which he had been flitting about the neighbourhood for so long. “Well, I suppose you will soon be driving Scheidemann?” he winked slyly to his chauffeur at

parting. He stood before them all now in his youthful freshness, his cheeks glowing from the cold wintry air, the intensely blue eyes that gave him a certain superficial resemblance to his great ancestor Frederick, just a little too bright, a little too wide open as he stared at his father and saw that the older man was completely at his wits' end. "His face, which had become haggard and yellow, quivered and trembled." Thus father and son faced each other in the most critical moment of their lives, separated from each other by the gulf of distrust and misunderstanding so frequent between the Hohenzollern generations; for "William III," the heir-apparent, had hitherto received no excessive paternal affection from a father whose emotional nature was, like his left arm, withered somewhat. He had been brought up with military severity by other people, and had only been permitted to observe his father's great deeds during all the twenty-five years of his long reign from a discreet distance and with appropriate admiration.

The Emperor had, however, spared his son the hardships of the grammar-school years, on which he himself looked back with shudders. After several years under a private tutor he had been placed in a school especially created for him and his five brothers at the Institute of Cadets amidst the lakes and forests of Holstein. Thence the Crown Prince passed as a lieutenant into the barracks of the First Foot Guards, after solemnly swearing the military oath to his Imperial father (who employed the fine deep chest notes he had plentifully at command for such occasions) in the (of course) "venerable old" castle chapel in Berlin. There followed military service, year in year out, for the Crown Prince, just as if every Hohenzollern must be prepared solely for war and needed no other training at all for his possible future duties as a ruler.

What passed in the Crown Prince's mind and heart that

grey November day at Spa? In spite of all the reminiscences and confessions published since then by himself and others, we shall probably never know his soul's real experience in those difficult and critical hours; it was apparently nothing very deep, for otherwise he would surely have acted very differently. Conceive the situation. The crown is slipping from his father's brows—a moment to which most Crown Princes ardently look forward, a moment of supreme—one might almost say Shakespearean—dramatic importance, has come upon him. Yet he does not so much as dally with the idea of seizing the falling diadem and setting it upon his own forehead. Compare him for a moment with his grandfather, who panted for the throne for a generation, and even as a dying man was determined to snatch his moment as “the Emperor Frederick III.” How would *he* have behaved placed in the prime of life in the situation in which this William now found himself? Frederick would have leaped like a tiger upon the throne left vacant by his father's abdication, though it had cost him his head a thousand times over.

This amazing Crown Prince, however, did not stretch out a finger for the sceptre, did not make a single attempt to reconquer his throne at the head of the loyalists at home—and were there not still many loyalists in those days? It seems almost as if in him the Royal Hohenzollern strain had become degenerate and played out, that the lust to wield the sceptre was dead. Instead he succumbed to a melting mood, suggested to him by the sentimental soldier song of some passing troops, wrote a pretty letter of parting to Hindenburg, and, by way of driving the final nail into the coffin of German Imperialism, followed his father's disgraceful example, deserted the colours, and fled to Holland.

There is probably no other example in the history of the world of an Emperor and his heir, a father and son, fleeing simultaneously from their own subjects to find safety

abroad. And yet the Crown Prince was not a personal coward. He was, at any rate, braver than William II. As General of the Fifth Army Corps and Commander-in-Chief of the Crown Prince's Forces, he had actually stared death in the face more than once during the four years of the war, besides being frequently menaced by bombing aeroplanes in his villa in the prim and pretty little town of Stenay on the Maas. It was probably not, therefore, fears for his person that drove him to the security of Holland. If he is anything more than an empty braggart, a man who before one of his unsuccessful attacks on Verdun could give the order that "in renewing the attack upon the strongly massed enemy defences neither men nor munitions are to be spared" would probably be ready to pledge his own life in an extremity. No; it was more likely an insuperable weariness of spirit that rendered him listless, ready to drift effortlessly across the frontier. He was sick of the butchery of war. It had been delightful to play the soldier in peacetime, the soft busby of the Danzig Death's Head Hussars pulled rakishly a little on one side upon his Royal Hohenzollern head, but to sit year in year out in the trenches at the Front, unable to go backwards or forwards, obliged simply to carry out orders issued by certain wiseacres on the General Staff far behind the lines, was enough eventually to get on the nerves of the keenest militarist. The thought of Holland, where a single step would remove him at once from all this seething strife, lured him like a siren song. "O happy day, when the soldier returns home to life, to humanity!" With memories of Matkovsky at the Berlin Court Theatre the words echoed seductively in his ears. "Why not wait a few weeks in a neutral country," he thinks, "until the worst storms are over, until reason and common sense have won a victory for peace and quiet, and *then*, or at latest when peace is signed, return to your wife and children, and to the new work which will lie before you?" By this time his car was close to the wire-

entanglements of the Dutch frontier. He hesitates for a moment, a little moment during which the dice are thrown among the Immortals for the dynasty of the Hohenzollerns and the throne of Prussia. He thought of words he had heard spoken by General Falkenhayn, his first military instructor, "First throw your heart over—then all the rest will follow." Then he surrendered his sword—O warrior ghost of the Hohenzollerns, genius of the one and only Fritz, veil your face!—surrendered his sword to a young Dutch officer. "A moment full of abysmal bitterness," he himself writes, "rendered endurable only by the perfect tact of others."

Once in Holland, all did not proceed exactly according to his hopes. He was held up for some hours outside Maastricht while "his fate was decided." In Maastricht itself, as at his father's arrival, there was hissing and booing from the crowds in the streets, chiefly from Belgian refugees who had fled for safety there. Shut up in a room in the local prefecture the thirty-six-year-old Crown Prince laughed like a great schoolboy when his faithful companion made some joking remarks about a plaster cast of his blood-relative and namesake, William III of Holland, one of the finest sons of the House of Orange, which occupied a corner of the room. "Yes, yes, my good van Houten—you would never have dreamed of this, would you?" No other passage in the Crown Prince's reminiscences carries with it a stronger conviction that all is over with the Kaiser business!

Maastricht was followed by ten days' custody in a castle at Roermond, and the Crown Prince even began to hope that this would prove a second Amerongen for him. The lady of the castle, young, fair, clad all in black with a necklace of pearls about her slender throat, had set his inflammable heart beating agreeably. But an order came from Queen Wilhelmina and her Government that he should proceed to the island of Wieringen, far up the

Zuider Zee, at the northernmost point of Holland, and there take up his residence for the future.

The Crown Prince spent nearly five years of banishment on this bare and sandy islet, often fog-bound in winter, in a small, neat, typically Dutch parsonage, the "Pastorie" of Oosterland near Hypolitushof, which was the only place of considerable size on the island. Although a prolonged stay there would certainly prove monotonous and wearisome enough after a time, there was no justification for making a second St. Helena out of it as the Crown Prince has attempted to do in his published memoirs of those years, compiled with the assistance of the vigorous but sentimental writer Rosner. An enormous correspondence linked him daily and regularly with the outside world, and beside his bed stood a telephone which he was permitted to use without supervision. The Dutch Government gave him free and willing permission to go to the mainland from time to time, either to visit a dentist or his friends, or even to spend days at a time with his father and his invalid mother at Doorn. Everything he might require for his comfort could be speedily procured from the big town of Alkmaar at no great distance away, or from Enkhuizen or Amsterdam. He often got more visitors at Wieringen than he wanted, both Germans and foreigners, but particularly Americans. His wife and children visited him for weeks at a time, and he did not lack for money, even though his niggardly and selfish father advanced none too much from Doorn. The island climate is good, particularly in summer, when Wieringen is a seaside resort, and the inhabitants are frank and friendly with people whom they get to know.

Therefore the Crown Prince's years of banishment need not have been a period of total blackness and melancholy, though they naturally could not compare with the unforgettable years of the war for excitement and incident, nor with the carefree, comfortable life which followed for him at the end of his five years' exile on Wieringen, when,

having renounced the throne, he settled down in a splendid and spacious Renaissance castle at Öls, near Sibyllenort, the former seat of the last King of Saxony, there to enjoy to his heart's content his two favourite occupations of hunting and horse-breeding. The Crown Prince, however, showed that he had inherited something of his Imperial father's theatrical nature, not only in the beaming glance of the eyes by which he was always striving to create an effect, but also in the somewhat affected and high-flown style of his writings. In this last respect, indeed, he indulges in bigger sentimental debauches than his father, for the most part sober and dry enough as a writer, and the reader who turns through the pages of his *Reminiscences* cannot help noticing how much too often he hugs himself in the rôle of the martyr of Wieringen. "I am neither by predisposition nor by training sentimental," he says somewhere, giving himself away completely, "and I do not intend to abandon myself to emotion, but I can honestly admit that the island seems emptier than ever to me now that my wife and the little ones are gone. Added to that, telephone communication with the mainland has been cut off (just think!), so that one really is isolated from all the world." Accordingly there was nothing left for the unhappy prisoner but to sit by the warm stove under the brilliant petroleum lamp and read and read—read more, in fact, than during the whole previous thirty-six years of his life. Even where Rosner has not retouched it, his style occasionally reminds one of the high-flown writing of some of our most popular modern novelists. The sarcastic younger brother who suggested the post of superintendent in the Church for his father, the Emperor, once expressed a belief that William would have no difficulty in getting taken on the staff of a German family newspaper.

In other respects the younger William was very unlike his parent. "It is a striking and recurrent characteristic of our family that father and son should be completely at

variance in character, temperament, and disposition, and, so far as I know the Emperor and myself, it holds good in our case," remarks the Crown Prince at the beginning of his *Reminiscences*. In the first place the son was lighter, easier, and "faster" in his way of life than his father, with his parsonific bent and love of moral sermons, could ever have been. It was for this reason that even in very early manhood he arrived at a far truer estimate of his libertine yet able great-uncle, Edward of England, than the Emperor, who was always blinded by his moral prejudices. A common weakness for the fair sex, which became apparent in the Crown Prince even in boyhood, united the younger scamp with the elder, who always regretted that his cheerful and amusing great-nephew could not supersede the grave and moral parent who exuded duty and virtue at every pore. The Crown Prince's own remarks upon his deceased great-uncle, King Edward VII and his policy, are among the most acute comments we have upon this supposed enemy of Germany.

There can be no doubt that the Crown Prince's later amorous adventures have been greatly exaggerated. As a young man with the "troubadour temperament" he liked the society of actresses and singers, such as the foreigner Geraldine Farrar, but the gossip about his scandalous life with light Frenchwomen during the war, when he was in supreme command at Stenay and elsewhere, cannot bear closer investigation. He may, it is true, have been guilty of an occasional infidelity in his married life, but as the father of his dear Cecilie's six fine healthy children he cannot have been a dissolute debauchee. Moreover, the tone in which he refers in his diaries to the wife, whom, as a young man of two-and-twenty, he rescued from the dull household of her widowed mother, the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg, among the pine forests of Gelbensande, is throughout frank, pleasant, and worthy.

Like his father he was usually a very moderate drinker

even in his student days at Bonn, where he was a keen member of the blue-blooded Students' Club "Borussia," though by his father's most strict orders he never took part as a combatant in the *Mensur*, the students' duel. He had little liking for the heavy drinking competitions of the students, though otherwise he was fond of betting matches of all kinds, and habitual drunkards, such as he sometimes came across among the older Army officers, were abhorrent to him. As a keen sportsman he also ate with marked moderation. Again, like his father, he preferred cigarettes to other forms of smoking, though with typical Hohenzollern autocracy he would permit few in his company to follow his example, as the smoke hurt his sensitive eyes, which could bear no dazzling light. Straight and well formed, he took to sport from his boyhood far more enthusiastically than William II, who was, of course, prevented by his deformed arm from distinguishing himself in most of its forms. More particularly as a hunter he showed a very different calibre from his father, whose idea of the chase was to sit calmly in his chair and pick off the game driven towards him, causing a sanguinary massacre on all sides. The Crown Prince shot big game in India and elsewhere, and was really an expert in the art of "game-stalking," as he calls it in a lively diary of hunting days which might almost, here and there, have come from the pen of that ardent nature-writer and poet, Hermann Löns, one of the most precious of the human sacrifices who later went to the shambles under the Prince's leadership in the war. "I have never felt nearer to my God than when sitting, my rifle across my knee, in the golden dawn on some lonely mountain height, or in the sweet silence of the forest at nightfall," confesses this sprig of the House of Hohenzollern, whose greatest member had declared, "I cannot imagine any amusement for a prince more stupid and more displeasing to Heaven than hunting." William II did not transmit his piety to his son, who preferred to listen to

Charley's Aunt or *The Merry Widow* rather than to the Court chaplain Dryander's unctuous discourses, and even as a boy would omit attendance at church as often as he could evade the severe paternal eye. William II, on the contrary, liked to receive the Sacrament Sunday by Sunday, and could scarcely pass a church of any sort without going into it. In later years, as a lieutenant of the Guards, the Crown Prince could scarcely suppress a smile when the bigoted Empress, the mother he otherwise loved and honoured so dearly, would close her eyes as she walked beside him over the castle bridge in Berlin to avoid the sight of the nude figures of Grecian youths set up there from Schinkel's designs.

Again, in direct contrast to his father, the Crown Prince was no blind scorner of modern art. He preferred the Deutsche Theater in Berlin, at that time under progressive and live management, to his father's stiff Court stage, where words like "bed" and "nakedness" were never, never mentioned. He commanded Max Reinhardt (then considered the leader of artistic youth) to be presented to him, even though he, the Crown Prince, had nothing to do with the professorship conferred upon him by the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. The "*Siegesallee*," his father's ill-planned and worse executed stiff stone gallery of ancestors, and the whole business of ancestor-worship that went with it, seemed to the Crown Prince simply funny. Again, unlike William II, he did not venture on any precipitous judgments upon the art of the day, but simply said mildly, when he could not follow it, "I don't understand that at all." He would look at modern works such as Beyerlein's sensational military piece *Zapfenstreich* (*Tattoo*), with real curiosity, and he would have devoted himself far more keenly to the study of modern life upon the stage if each occasion on which he attempted to do so had not been followed by an extremely harsh and ungracious calling to order on his parent's part. Indeed, the latter's strict rod of correction had been no joking



'WILLIAM III "

After a photograph by the Photographische Gesellschaft, Berlin

matter for the young Crown Prince. As a child, when permitted to visit his father's study, he had always to keep his hands rigidly crossed behind his back for fear he should knock something over. A certain harsh and stern General with a strong sense of duty, one Herr von Lyncker (the Hohenzollern rulers have always had a genius for picking out such ill-natured tormenters as tutors for their sons), took care that a proper distance was maintained between the Emperor and the "mere" Crown Prince. The "third-party system," as the Crown Prince calls it in his *Reminiscences*—that is to say, the customary employment of an intermediary between the Emperor and his sons, but particularly his eldest son—was even more jealously observed and cultivated by William II than by any other Hohenzollern monarch.

Friction between father and son was frequent from an early date. Even the Crown Prince's harmless successes as a jockey were too much for the jealousy of the Emperor, and gave rise to a violent scene between them, one of many which the son, out of regard for his father, refuses to particularize farther. The one success the Kaiser conceded him was the smart youngster's invention of a new sort of shirt-button, he himself having just presented the German people with his device for making the moustache-ends stand up, patented as "*Es ist erreicht!*", or "Found at last!" For the rest he was careful to keep the Crown Prince in a very tight muzzle, which he would have done far better to wear himself. Once only during the five-and-twenty peace years of William II's reign was his son allowed to open his mouth. This was in 1907, when the Kaiser's then most intimate friend, Prince Philip Eulenburg, was charged with homosexual practices, and the Emperor's own person was involved in the gossip. The result for William II was a breakdown, resembling, though less acute than, that which followed the attack in the Reichstag in 1908, and to those about him he seemed for a time a nervous, if not actually

a mental, invalid. In his account of that period the Crown Prince, somewhat stupidly as it seems to us, asserts that "The Kaiser's moral purity was so great that he could scarcely imagine the possibility of such sexual aberrations." A man of his father's age, who had spent most of his life in barrack yards, must surely have had some notion of such "swineishness," to use William's own simple expression; and, indeed, he must have heard such aberrations discussed in connection with the Krupp case some years previously.

Unfortunately this was the first and last occasion on which the Crown Prince was permitted to overstep the respectful distance from his father which he had been trained to observe, by his mother among others, and was able to venture a word or two. Augusta Victoria, while uniting the two proud names of her two Imperial predecessors, had nothing of the Empress Augusta's and the Empress Victoria's dominance and capacity for standing up to their lords and masters. A poor little Princess of Holstein modestly brought up, William, her exalted spouse, remained always for her the Emperor, for whom it was to command while everyone else must obey. Everyone—even her eldest son, of whose buoyancy and vigour she was secretly so proud. But she would never herself have ventured to oppose his mighty father, Emperor by the Grace of God, nor would she ever have encouraged her son to do so. The consequence was that the Crown Prince did not seize his opportunity in November 1908—on the occasion referred to above, when his father, a broken man, could easily have been persuaded to abdicate—and make himself William III; no more than he seized a similar opportunity ten years later, when the crown actually lay at his feet.

The truth is that, like all Prussians at that time, he was emasculated—deprived of the power to decide and to act by the blind obedience to the one All-Highest War Lord crammed and drilled into him and into all soldiers. Men

in the highest positions of command in the Army might only exercise their authority, as it were, downwards. Not one of them, not the heir-apparent himself, might venture to express an independent thought to their master; they had either to keep silence, or at most entrust their ideas to paper, without a hope that their suggestions would ever be followed. "A soldier has nothing to do with politics"—this totally false and absurd commonplace (for, after all, even a soldier has a brain to think with) became under William II a divine ordinance. Hence it came about that in the German Empire's hour of danger and collapse men who had hitherto been mere secretaries of trade unions had greater confidence to act and take command than men who had held the highest ranks in the Army, not excepting the Crown Prince, who resigned himself, as if to the will of God, from the moment that he heard that the new Government did not count on his military services for the future.

At the same time Germany's last Crown Prince had a far better head for dealing with matters of State and for observing the way of the world than his illustrious father, who thought he knew everything better than anyone else. When the Crown Prince returned from his hunting expedition in India and his father, with his habitual shallow optimism, fondly supposed that the journey could not have failed to give the world a great impression of the might of the German Empire, his son took him aback by telling him quite frankly that, looked at from that point of view, his excursion had been a complete failure. He said that in Eastern Asia England was "*über alles, über alles in der Welt*," her prestige was supreme, and that, moreover, if it came to war in good earnest, her Dominions would stand loyally by the Motherland. It is easy to see what effect these "pessimistic" remarks must have had on William, who was determined to see everything *couleur de rose* from the point of view of his own interests. "Papa is very displeased, and will not come down to dinner with us," Augusta

Victoria had to tell her son a quarter of an hour later!

Before the war the Crown Prince was widely held to be a hothead, even actually a firebrand and stirrer-up of trouble. This was not wholly unjust. He wrote an aggressive introduction to an illustrated book entitled *Deutschland in Waffen* (*Germany in Arms*), and wired his agreement to various pan-German or violently patriotic officers when they wrote demanding perpetual readiness for war in Germany. He applauded over-aggressive military measures, as for example, in Alsace-Lorraine, even using on one occasion the Berlin phrase (since become notorious and denied by himself), "*Immer feste druff!*" ("Go on! That's the stuff to give 'em!"). It should, however, be remembered in this connection that the unavoidable necessity for a trial-of-arms with the foreigner once conceded in Germany, and Schlieffen's plans for a war on two fronts once adopted by the General Staff, it is very questionable whether it would not really have been better to begin the business before 1914, that unhappy year in which the circle of Germany's enemies finally closed about her, so that, at best, only an indecisive conclusion of the struggle could be hoped for. On all sides the Crown Prince heard it perpetually whispered that everything was ready for the argument of blood. He saw, furthermore, that his father, who thought himself God knows how clever a statesman, and all his political advisers, let slip in masterly fashion two favourable opportunities for setting the German Empire in a more secure position—namely, the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War. His impatience, therefore, was not so surprising when he said that it looked as if they were not to begin to fight for the crown (that, after all, was to be his own some day) until their enemies had grown stronger still and Germany was entirely cut off and isolated.

Looked at from this standpoint the Crown Prince's war-mongering, which for the matter of that found very

restrained expression out of respect for the Kaiser, loses something of the inflammatory and sinister quality it had for many at the time. Abroad, at any rate, his practical and sturdy patriotism made less trouble than the half-and-half pacifism which William II conducted, while he allowed the rod to peep out threateningly from behind his back, and had the obvious intention of using it in any serious dispute. The Crown Prince possessed a clear appreciation of realities, as well as a certain inertia and slackness. Almost all who have had to do with him praise his talent for practical politics, though in his book *Ich suche die Wahrheit* (*I Seek the Truth*) his perception of the questions of the day and the art of statesmanship is blurred somewhat by the ideas of right and wrong he imports into world events. In this work he ponders in rather too ingenuous and partisan a spirit on the reasons for the outbreak of the World War, giving simply the outcome of a number of conversations between himself and Dutch or other foreigners whom he met during his banishment, and impressing the reader very strongly with the fact that he was a novice with little experience to go on in matters of statecraft. It was too late when William II at last made up his mind to assent to the Crown Prince's being instructed in affairs of State. With the time-honoured Hohenzollern mistrust and the detestable egoism of a complacent father, the Kaiser kept his eldest son and future successor out of all the business of government. Even now he was to be allowed no insight into Foreign Affairs, a most important subject for an heir-apparent, and one which, as the Crown Prince himself tells us, was habitually shrouded in mystery before him, as if it had been one of the black arts. A department of government in which William II, thanks to his early accession, had been able to try his hand at twenty-nine years of age, was to be taboo and forbidden ground to his son, even when the latter had passed his thirtieth year.

Although the Crown Prince was at first allowed to

approach only the most superficial questions of State (and the more burning ones never at all), he gave proof from the outset of a very good "nose" for the subject by his thorough dislike of Bethmann-Hollweg. Perhaps the "Miracle of the House of Brandenburg," as Frederick the Great was wont to name the Hohenzollerns' guardian spirit, gave the heir to the throne a sense that this Chancellor was destined to be the gravedigger of his dynasty. The grandson of a former Minister, one Bethmann-Hollweg, who from his seat at Hohenfinow wrote of Bismarck to William I, "Any understanding is impossible as long as this man stands at Your Majesty's side"—the grandson of a fool like that—the narrowest of all Chancellors had now succeeded by degrees in gaining an influence over the grandson of William I, the Emperor who, shortly after the beginning of his reign, had fulfilled Bethmann-Hollweg's grandfather's wish to sever himself and his House from Bismarck, the best and truest servant of the Hohenzollerns who ever lived.

From the first, however, the young Crown Prince distrusted the Chancellor with the tired eyes, dull and passionless from much reading of law, and to the political somersaults of this learned fool of a jumped-up "*Landrat*," he opposed his own ready mother-wit and common sense. It was almost as if the Crown Prince had heard the man's wife cry out when she heard that her husband was appointed Imperial Chancellor—it was the cry of plain, unperverted good sense—"No! he cannot do it!" But the Kaiser, himself essentially small-minded, liked this second-rate quill-driver, and he forbade his eldest son, bluntly, categorically, and once for all, to interfere any further in the administration (so-called) of his favourite. Furthermore, he particularly forbade him to touch Foreign Affairs, which Bethmann continued to carry on like a secret cult, and for which he entirely lacked the aptitude, well and clearly formulated by the Crown Prince, as "a knowledge of men,

and a clear perception of the general mental attitude of the various peoples."

Thus the World War began, and at first, as William's son himself tells us, Bethmann, with not the remotest conception of the real situation, hoped to have England and Rumania on our side, and would not hear of any alliance with Turkey or Bulgaria, as being, in his political philosophy, Powers hostile to Germany. "The Chancellor's knowledge of the world was almost phantasmal," says the Crown Prince very justly in his revelations about Bethmann-Hollweg. During the four years of the War, William II's heir-presumptive became more and more the peace-loving citizen of the world—indeed, almost a pan-European. While his father humbugged himself and let others humbug him to the last, the Crown Prince, even as an Army Commander, recognized the seriousness of our attempt to make war with practically the whole world. "The butcher, the blood-drinker of Verdun, the slayer of children and ravisher of women" (and whatever other terms of abuse the French Press at that time daily heaped upon him) was one of the first to advise that the slaughter should cease, since there was no prospect of an eventual victory for Germany. He whom the same Press called "*l'homme qui rit*," and represented as a perpetually laughing butcher, lost his gaiety, in fact, very early, and raised a warning voice when a timely end might have been put to the bloodshed, and a more favourable peace might have been attained. But Bethmann and the Kaiser dared not tell the people and the Reichstag the truth; while Ludendorff, a splendid soldier, but, as the Crown Prince very rightly estimated even during the war, lacking the calm judgment proper to a politician, hoped up to the last, as did the whole Higher Command which he represented, for a turn in the fortunes of war. The only thing William's son achieved by his advice and his suggestions that the situation should be reconsidered was to bring an accusation of defeatism and faint-heartedness upon

himself. "*Durchhalten! Das Maul halten!*" ("Stick it! Hold your tongue!")—with these ill-inspired watchwords of William II's the Crown Prince's mouth was effectually silenced. The Kaiser's son, brought up from infancy to obedience and to little else, continued to practise dumb submission to his unteachable father. He made one more attempt in writing to work upon the minds of the Higher Command and upon the heart of the Emperor by submitting memorials; but these were scarcely read, and were thrust aside with the innumerable other documents written at that time; the country having stumbled into beginning the War continued to stumble through to its tragic and horrible end.

The Emperor's son, who had often indulged in enthusiastic dreams of his great ancestors, of Frederick the Great and even of Napoleon I, had now not sufficient will-power in himself to fight personally for his crown and to stake his own head against the hope of victory. The despicable Prussian political ideas that had now become the standard for all Germany, obedience to and unthinking dependence on the All-Highest Command—the horrible phrase derives from Bethmann-Hollweg's wastepaper-basket of a mind—this belief, fit only for slaves, had broken the Crown Prince's will and spirit. He was no longer capable of conceiving or doing anything but following his father as heretofore, and once again he obediently copied his unworthy model.

In a retired corner of the last Belgian castle occupied for a short time by the German heir-apparent before the precipitous fall of the Empire drove him from it, a French comic drawing hung, framed and glazed. It was an old copper-plate engraving, discreetly illustrating that modest throne to which mankind must regularly resort for the preservation of health, and, indeed, of life itself. Beneath this picture were a few lines of verse in illuminated lettering, stating that this throne had outlasted all the Royal

thrones in the world and would outlast them! The Crown Prince, in his hour of indecision, smiled wryly as his eye fell upon this odd and scanty decent allegory, the work of a bygone age of Republican ideals. Was the time now to begin for Germany that the men of the 'forty-eight had dreamed of seventy years ago? At that moment the corroboratory telegrams arrived from Berlin; Chancellor Scheidemann had proclaimed a German Republic from the roof of the Reichstag in Berlin amidst tremendous acclamations, and had nominated his comrade, Fritz Ebert, formerly a saddler, as first President of the Realm. "William III" made place forthwith for the new German Republic, and the new Free State of Germany began its existence—misunderstood at first by the majority of its own citizens, who had never been taught to be free men but only mere vassals; yet it did begin slowly and laboriously to live, never to die again.

ERNST VON WILDENBRUCH

(1845-1909)

*"Das Blut der Ahnen
Schreibt dem Enkel die Bahnen."*

("The blood of the fathers
Prescribes the son's paths.")

ERNST VON WILDENBRUCH has a place among the Hohenzollerns not only as the bard and singer of that now fallen dynasty whose rise and fame he celebrated in some six or seven plays, but also as claiming direct affinity of blood through his descent from one of the most brilliant sons of the race, the fiery and passionate Prince Louis Ferdinand, the hero of many a song and story. His father sprang from this Prince's union with the beautiful Henrietta Frommel, but for this one "lapse" a strictly decorous lady, who later married a certain worthy War Office official. Louis, as the gallant Prince's son was named after his father, was immediately ennobled, together with his sister Blanca, by his Hohenzollern cousin, King Frederick William III, and provided both with a circumstantially informative coat-of-arms and the name "von Wildenbruch," poetically indicative of his origin. Like his father and most other Hohenzollerns, young Louis naturally became a soldier; but as a Guards officer it is possible that von Wildenbruch, with his baton sinister, found life a little difficult in correct and aristocratic Potsdam, and at twenty-six years of age, half-willingly and half-unwillingly, he allowed himself to be transferred to the Embassy at Constantinople. There he was bitten with the love of the East, and no doubt found that there were advantages in living on the Golden Horn or elsewhere on the shores of the blue

Mediterranean, where a man's family tree is subject to less rigorous scrutiny than in Potsdam. Having become engaged to a most charming but delicate and highly-strung lady of the Court, whom he had met at the house of his paternal Aunt Louise, now Princess Radziwill, he managed to inspire his young bride with a similar enthusiasm for the Orient, and early in the 'forties the pair, as "Herr and Frau Generalkonsul von Wildenbruch," proceeded to Beirut in Syria, where, being only "poor Prussians," they had no very enviable position beside the wealthier representatives of England and France. It was at Beirut that their poet son was born and baptized "Ernst," after his mother's name of "Ernestine." Frau von Wildenbruch being at that time in very poor health and obliged to reserve her strength for a somewhat difficult husband, an Arabian nurse suckled the babe who was destined to grow into such a thorough-going Prussian. Louis von Wildenbruch, being subject to removal at the bidding of the Prussian Foreign Office, soon left Beirut, and the place made less impression on his son than did Athens, where they subsequently spent a year. The child was known in the family as "stupid Erny," because he developed slowly and learned to talk very late. The boy's father was sent to Athens at a time when the Hohenzollern dynasty was slowly recovering from the effects of the 'forty-eight—not, unfortunately, as ambassador, but simply as Resident Minister for Prussia. Like Geibel, who in the capacity of private tutor had trodden the hallowed ground of Attica some ten years previously, young Wildenbruch was deeply impressed by the land and city of Theseus, though naturally to a lesser degree than Geibel, who, besides being a grown man while von Wildenbruch was but a child, was also a more inspired poet. Nevertheless, in the *Lieder des Euripides* (*Songs of Euripides*), one of Wildenbruch's last plays, there is a note of longing for a time long past and the vanished realms of childhood.

“Nevermore to see the head of Athene
Rising over Sunion’s cliffs,
Nevermore to hear the sound of sheep-bells
High above on blue Hymettus,
Hellas, my home!
Naught but a dream now in the poet’s soul,
A lingering echo in the poet’s song!”

On leaving Athens, Louis von Wildenbruch, slowly rising in his profession in spite of envious and malicious rivals, received the appointment of Ambassador at the Sublime Porte, and for the next five years the family lived in the glittering city on the Bosphorus, often exploring it and the teaming wood-built villages round about it in expeditions in the *koi* that swarmed on the warm bosom of the seas about Stamboul. At the end of that time the mother’s illness—she was already mortally stricken with cancer of the breast—brought the family back from the south to the grey northern skies of Germany. The next period in the life of young Wildenbruch, undistinguished by aught as yet save his fat and rosy countenance, was spent at the French Grammar School, the so-called Huguenot School, in Berlin, whence his father transferred him to the Cadet Corps at Potsdam. In 1860 he was promoted to the Cadet College in Berlin, and three years later became a second lieutenant in the first regiment of Guards in Potsdam. He did not distinguish himself greatly at any of the schools he attended. He says whimsically of himself: “He is thought very stupid and lazy. He is particularly bad at writing German essays. Cannot express himself well. Is unlikely to get promotion.” In the Army this Hohenzollern showed not the slightest aptitude for things military, although the idea of war was at that time in the air. In the two campaigns in which he took part Ernst, unlike his lyrical foster-brother, the impetuous Liliencron, never actually came under fire or within sight of the enemy. His father Louis was in despair over this extraordinary son of his, who was not happy in the uniform. He sought to remind him of his

blue blood. "Remember that you are a direct great-great-nephew of Frederick the Great, that you are as nearly related to that man of iron and duty as the King himself." In many of the letters of introduction he wrote on Ernst's behalf, he points out that his son is the descendant of the brave Prince Louis Ferdinand, the only member of the House of Hohenzollern to seal his heroism by death on the battlefield—a remark which would hardly have flattered the ears of the other Hohenzollerns.

Old Herr von Wildenbruch, however, was eventually obliged to admit to himself that talent cannot be expelled by a pitchfork, and perceiving that the youngster was devoting all his energies to the urge to write poetry, to the detriment of his military career, he consented willy-nilly to his son's discarding the uniform and returning to school again; for the young rascal, even while a lieutenant, had consumed ink and paper in a way that simply horrified his father, and still more the latter's grave son-in-law, Count Yorck von Wartenburg.

Otto Frick, who had formerly been tutor to the Wildenbruch children in Constantinople, received Ernst, a somewhat elderly schoolboy, into the Grammar School at Burg, where he was now headmaster, and his pupil eventually passed the leaving examination at the age of twenty-two. Young Wildenbruch now set out for Berlin as a law student, taking with him two trunks, one entirely filled with manuscript, and took up his abode not in any of the Hohenzollern palaces but in modest student apartments in the Mohrenstrasse. The city in which his Royal grandfather had once lived so gay and reckless a life became henceforth his real home. He was as happy exchanging jokes with the cabbies and stall-keepers in the Berlin dialect he had known from childhood as if he had been christened in Spree water instead of in the dews of Lebanon. Even his verse seemed to take wings, if, as frequently, he made use of the Berlin idiom in his plays and poems. Meanwhile the future jurist

pursued the usual orderly course, passed his first examination for the Bar, went for practice as a "*Referendar*" to Frankfurt-on-Oder, where the famous Eduard Simson, who had vainly offered Frederick William IV the Imperial crown and who was later to become the first Lord Chief Justice of the Empire, presided over the Courts; then, having passed the qualifying examination as *Assessor*, became assistant magistrate in Eberswalde, and so—"on revient toujours"—back to Berlin. Wildenbruch had begun to find that the two callings of lawyer and poet went ill together, and accordingly he entered the Foreign Office, as his father, now gone to his grave in a mood of dissatisfaction with the new age "pervaded by Bismarck," had done before him. He had no intention, however, of being sent on embassies abroad, for this Wildenbruch had taken firm root in the sand of the Mark. He found a post in the juristic department of the Foreign Office, which, while not absolutely a sinecure, was not very exigent, occupying him from midday till five o'clock or so, and leaving him free evenings.

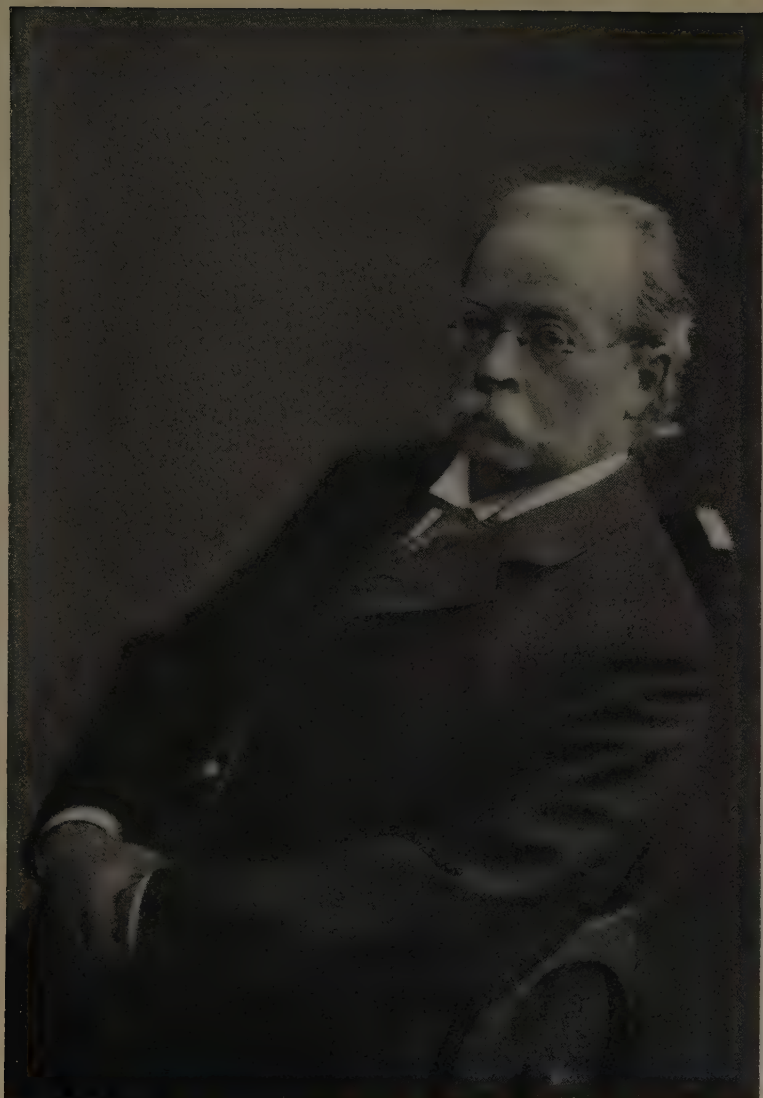
So far everything in his "*curriculum vitae*," even including the process of changing his profession, had been tolerably normal; but the man who had cut out, or had had cut out for him, this career as a higher civil servant was meanwhile pursuing an occupation entirely outside the usual routine of a barrister and "*Geheimrat*," namely, that of poetry. Although most of his friends tried repeatedly to dissuade him from it (as, for example, Fontane, who could not detect a trace of genius in his work), and although in all literary contests the pieces he entered for literary competition never failed to return to him unadorned with laurels, and he could find no one to print them, far less produce them, Wildenbruch continued, with the perseverance of a loaded mule climbing a mountain-side, and with a simplicity of mind and a lack of misgiving as to the quality of his works which has something touching about it, to add drama after drama

to the pile which encumbered his desk. There was his *Spartakus*, which even his tutor and friend Frick rejected as immature and worthless; there was his *Daniel in the Den of Lions*, which sent those to whom he read it into fits of laughter; there was a comedy entitled *Theory and Practice*, which was "a matter for tears," as Julien Schmidt cruelly remarked; there was his *King of Candia*, which even his admirer, Litzmann, found too childish. He next wrote a drama, *Harold the Anglo-Saxon*, followed by a lively "modern" piece, *At the High School*, which the critics pronounced extremely flat and insipid. His tragedy, *The Menonite*, was followed by a second, *The Carolingians*, and a third, *Christopher Marlow*. Between these and after them came *Fathers and Sons*, *The Lady's Hand*, and *The New Commandment*. Thus Wildenbruch offered the stage *Sacrifice after Sacrifice* (the title of another of his plays at this period), while not a manager of them all would bite. On the contrary, they were all of one mind with the Karlsruhe manager von Putlitz, who said: "My dear Herr von Wildenbruch, I beseech you to give up the drama and stick to your epic songs like *Vionville* and *Sedan*." But the determined poet did not relax one whit, and at last, carried on a wave of patriotism which occurred in those years, he attained success through a performance in Berlin of his *Carolingians*. From this time on Wildenbruch was considered the most talented and spirited of the older generation of German playwrights—for he was forty before he won his first laurels. He now married Fräulein Maria von Weber, a somewhat elderly young lady, a granddaughter of the romantic composer, and the bridal pair, whose marriage proved a quietly satisfactory one, moved at once into the sort of house "*Geheimräte*" at that date were wont to occupy in the Tiergarten quarter of Berlin. The house was in the Hohenzollernstrasse, and what address could have been more appropriate for a poetic offshoot of the race which about this time was presenting the German nation with a third Emperor in the person of William II?

Success now followed success for the persevering and industrious Wildenbruch. "Love of the Fatherland is service to God" was the motto under which he continued to write. *The Quitzows*, his greatest stage triumph, was produced at the Royal Theatre with Mitterwurzer and Matkowsky in the caste, and it was followed by *The General* and *The New Lord*. He had hoped that the last two pieces would further him on the brilliant and victorious way struck out in *The Quitzows*, and might even bring him the title of "The Shakespeare of the Hohenzollerns." But now a most unexpected and unlikely thing occurred. The performance of these two dramas, which were designed to glorify the House of Hohenzollern by one who shared their blood, was absolutely interdicted at the Court and other theatres in Berlin by the new Emperor's express command. Bismarck's son informed the poet of his Imperial relative's decision, adding the warning that, although William did not as yet require Wildenbruch to resign his official position, the Emperor strongly recommended him to choose pleasanter periods of Prussian history for dramatic treatment in the future.

Wildenbruch sickened and pined on the artistic side of his nature after that rebuff, just as, in his opinion, all Prussian Germany waned and faded with the departure of the greatest of its Chancellors. He had one more big popular success with his Berlin play *The Crested Lark*, and *Henry and Henry's Race* also pleased the public. His *Daughter of Erasmus* and *Lady of Rabenstein*, into which he introduced his already popular recitation piece *The Witches' Song*, brought him for a time the favour of all the many girls' schools in Germany, but for all that the dramatist in him had been stricken to the heart by his Emperor's disfavour, and he ever after tended to follow the beaten paths of sentiment in what he wrote.

But the poem he dedicated to Bismarck after the latter's dismissal, fully realizing in advance that he was playing



ERNST VON WILDENBRUCH

After a photograph

fast and loose with his Royal cousin's favour, shows that Wildenbruch was not a man to cringe or even to walk over-delicately. In the evening of his days, when he retired from the Foreign Office (in which it must be admitted he had cut little ice) decorated with the Order of the Crown, second class, he had no longer cause to care greatly for the good will of the All-Highest, concern for which had occupied him far too much during a great part of his life. The money coming in from the theatres and his publishers enabled him to build himself a house, the "Haus Ithaka," in Weimar, a dwelling-place even quieter than the one he continued to retain on the quiet Landwehr Canal in Berlin. This "Wahnfried" of his, into which he moved at the age of sixty-two, was destined to be his residence for two summers only. The poet who loved to fill his dramas with blood and thunder, while his personal appearance was that of a hum-drum bookkeeper or petty official, was filled at his life's close with a strange unrest. This unrest found expression in perpetual speeches, written admonitions and exhortations with titles like "A Word to the Germans," "Landgrave, be severe!", "*Furor Teutonicus*," "A Word at the Eleventh Hour," and "The German New Year, 1909." These warning cries of his to a nation that did not understand them and, in its self-satisfaction and superficial prosperity, would not understand them, ring harsh as the barking of a dog in the night when it hears the approach to its house of some yet distant peril. His inward unrest eventually drove him out of his peaceful retreat in Weimar, sick, deaf, and weary as he was, back to his beloved Hohenzollernstrasse in Berlin. He had always done much of his work at night, and now he sleeplessly paced his study, all silent save for the ticking of the big clock, trotting to and from his big mahogany roll-top desk, felt slippers on his feet, his cigar cold in his hand, ceaselessly harassed and tormented by fears for Prussia, for the Hohenzollerns and for Germany. Even wine, which had often carried him

on heavy pinions, if not to the summit of Parnassus at least to its foot, had ceased to bring him any comfort. It was as if the approaching fall of his House, that dynasty of Kings, was making itself felt in this poetic sprig of the old stock, just as the coming fall of a great tree sets its more sensitively hung leaves quivering before the branches begin to shake. The coming World War oppressed his heart with nightmare forebodings. A spectral darkness filled his mind, as it had so often filled the stage in his dramas, and he perished like his grandfather Prince Louis Ferdinand, staring his race's and his country's downfall in the face. When death came to him the poet who had so often closed his patriotic plays with prophecies of happiness to come had nothing but ruin and bitterness to proclaim. "Over," he whispered to his wife as she bent over him at the last, "All over!"—repeating himself with the irritable intonation of a deaf man who thinks he has not been heard, and as if it had suddenly been revealed to him that his whole race and his epoch were with him toppling from their pedestals.

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